



EU Statement

Thematic discussion on Small Arms & Light Weapons, and Stockpile Management

Arms Trade Treaty

Seventh Conference of State Parties

Geneva, 30 August – 3 September 2021

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia^{*}, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, we want to thank you, Mr. President, for convening us in this hybrid setting, enabling all relevant stakeholders to participate in this Conference, either physically or virtually. We welcome your leadership during the important preparatory and intersessional work, and for guiding us through this meeting. These are exceptional times. The efforts to promote the Arms Trade Treaty, its universalization and its implementation are as important as ever. Your continuous efforts in this regard are highly appreciated. We welcome your focus on safe stockpile management, and appreciate you taking EU comments on board, in your revised paper.

The EU wishes to thank the representatives of civil society, and industry many of whom are with us today, for their relentless dedication to promote the ATT. Civil society organizations continued over the past year to sustain targeted activities at national and regional levels in

^{*} The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

support of ATT universalization. They have also continued to conduct advocacy and engaged in information sharing activities to assist in treaty implementation and increase public awareness, maintaining the prioritization of the Treaty on States' political agendas.

Arms, including small arms and light weapons, have an indispensable role in the preservation of security, freedom, and peace, provided they are used in accordance with international law, including Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law. However, such arms are, by nature, designed to be capable of inflicting death and serious harm. This means that governments that control or transfer weapons must trade, use, and store these arms in a responsible and accountable way. Their diversion, including to unauthorised users must be prevented. The responsible trade in arms must remain our ambition.

Mr. President,

The EU would like to welcome those States that ratified or acceded to the Treaty since the fifth Conference of States Parties in August 2019: China, Sao Tome and Principe, Afghanistan, and Niue and have thereby shown their commitment to preventing illicit trade in conventional arms and their diversion to the illicit market or unauthorized end-users.

As ATT States Parties and stakeholders, we have a responsibility and are accountable for the decisions we take in regulating the arms trade and the subsequent management of traded arms and ammunition. Accountability requires transparency. The EU makes every effort to ensure that utmost transparency is being exercised with respect to the trade in arms. This enables national parliaments, civil society, and the media to hold informed debates and produce real and tangible accountability, ensuring the effective oversight of the trade in arms in all its aspects.

The topic you, Mr. President, have chosen as the core thematic focus of your ATT Presidency and for the 7th Conference of States Parties is intrinsically linked to key objectives of the Arms Trade Treaty, in particular to the prevention of diversion, illicit trade and unauthorised use of conventional arms. We welcome your proposal to strengthen efficient stockpile management in order to prevent diversion in the post-delivery phase, including stockpile security and management. In this regard we support further synergies between various instruments and initiatives, such as the United Nations' Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), the International Tracing Instrument, the Firearms Protocol, the African Union Silencing the Gun Initiative and ongoing discussion on technical guidelines.

Since its adoption in 2001 the EU has been supporting cooperation and assistance to third countries for the implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in All Its Aspects and engaging in ongoing ATT outreach. Most of these projects have a multiple regional scope and are implemented with the help of regional organizations and international partners. These include but are not limited to the African Union, ECOWAS, UNREC, and RECSA in Africa. In Europe, the EU works via the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearing House for the Control on SALW (SEESAC) that is part of UNDP, including support to the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to arms control in the Western Balkans by 2024. In Latin America, the EU has worked with the Central American Program for the Control of SALW (CASAC), UNLIREC and is working with the Organisation of American States (OAS). The EU is also supporting the League of Arab States in the fight against the illicit trade in SALW in cooperation with Interpol and the World Customs Organisation.

Since 2011 the EU has been supporting INTERPOL's Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System (iArms). iArms is an electronic platform that facilitates information exchange and investigative cooperation between law enforcement agencies. Since 2013 the EU has also been supporting iTrace, a global reporting mechanism on illicit SALW and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition in conflict affected areas implemented by Conflict Armament Research.

The risk of SALW diversion can significantly be reduced by effective arms export control and risk assessment prior to authorising a transfer. The use of authenticated end-user agreements or documents, as supported by the UN PoA and the ATT, should be promoted. In January 2021, the Council adopted a decision establishing a common approach on the elements of end-user certificates in the context of the export of SALW and their ammunition. The adoption of the Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/38 represents another important step towards further convergence in arms export policies of EU Member States. It also contributes to reducing the risk of arms diversion, creating a level playing field and increasing clarity for the defence industry and its clients.

The safe and secure management of SALW and ammunition stockpiles is critical in the prevention of illicit proliferation and accidental explosions. From its inception, the UN Programme of Action recognised stockpile management as one of the key responsibilities of the state in their efforts to prevent the diversion of SALW and is relevant to much of our work

within the ATT. Since adoption of the Council Decision CFSP 2020/979, the EU in cooperation with the Ammunition Management Advisory Team (AMAT) of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) has been exploring the possibility of developing an internationally recognized system to validate the arms and ammunition management practices and policies implemented by States and their armed forces.

As indicated in the EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms & light weapons and their ammunition, that was adopted by the Council of the European Union on 19 November 2018, the EU commits to continue supporting cooperation and assistance for the implementation of the UN Programme of Action and the ATT, with a focus on regional cooperation, and to participate in and support coordination with other donors. The European Union commits to full cooperation and coordination in preventing illicit trade of arms. The EU also commits to the provision of guidance in relation to efforts to combat the illicit trade of arms to any of its ATT partners in line with the recommendations in the Chair's paper.

Thank you, Mr. President