



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

**Ninth Conference of States Parties
Arms Trade Treaty
General Debate**

**Statement by the Head of the Delegation of Italy
Ambassador Leonardo Bencini**

Geneva, 21 August 2023

Madam President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your Presidency of the Ninth Conference of the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). I would like to assure you of Italy's support.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Madam President,

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the ATT by the General Assembly. Italy has always been a firm supporter of the Treaty, being actively involved in its negotiation process and being among the first countries to ratify it. For us this Treaty is not only a legal instrument to regulate trade in conventional arms and ammunition and thus to prevent and eradicate their illicit traffic and diversion, but it is also, and more broadly, a tool to promote high standards for the respect of human rights and international humanitarian law. The lack of this regulation may fuel in fact armed conflicts, organised crime, terrorism; generate violations of human rights; destabilise countries and jeopardise economic development.

Madam President,

We still have a great deal of work ahead of us towards the universalisation of the Treaty. We fully support all your efforts in this respect and those of your predecessor, Ambassador Goebel of Germany, and welcome the recommendations to enhance the work of the Working Group on Treaty Universalization (WGTU). We

commend the shift to a multi-year planning, the use of cooperation and assistance tools, tailored assistance and “regional championships”. We support the prioritisation of your universalization efforts this year on ASEAN countries; looking at other regions, we congratulate Gabon and Andorra on becoming new States Parties to the ATT. We call on all States not party to the Treaty to join it without delay.

Concerning the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI), Italy welcomes the work conducted by its chair, Ambassador Sanchez de Lerin of Spain, and Mr. Wensley of South Africa as facilitator of the Sub-working Group on art. 9. This work is very useful to evaluate exports requests to sensitive destinations and conduct sound risk assessment.

Looking at transfers, we appreciate the focus of your Presidency on the role of industry and welcome your working paper and the recommendations contained therein. We think in fact that a control system that addresses arms trade can only benefit from a responsible and structured exchange of views with the defence industry.

The Diversion Information Exchange Forum stands as a relevant instrument. A wider sharing of experiences among different actors implementing activities in arms trade may contribute to establish better awareness and encourage a more complete approach also in terms of arms export control.

We also commend the efforts aimed at enhancing openness and transparency in the implementation of the Treaty. In this context, I would like to report that since 2020 Italy has decided not to avail itself of the Art 13.3 clause, allowing States to exclude from their annual reports commercially sensitive or national security information, and to provide the ATT Secretariat with any data concerning countries of origin and destination of all categories of weapons.

Beyond our national approach, we support the discussions held and steps undertaken by States Parties towards improved reporting mechanisms encompassing training initiatives, confidence-building measures, and the use of a clear and uniform terminology when completing the annual reports. We are concerned by the low number of annual reports and call on all States Parties to comply with such Treaty obligations regularly and on time.

Madam President,

Italy strongly condemns the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Along with other EU Member States, we put an arms embargo in place vis-a-vis the Russian Federation. We condemn the use by Russia of various conventional weapons against civilians causing untold human

suffering and we call on all States Parties to refrain from any transfers to Moscow. This war also constitutes a case where legitimate transfers significantly contribute to the protection of values enshrined in the UN Charter and the right of self-defence and for this reason a number of EU Member States, including my own country, is supporting Ukraine with military assistance.

Madam President,

Let me conclude by renewing our call to all relevant States to settle their arrears without further delay, as we consider financial stability the only way for the ATT to function effectively.

Thank you, Madam President.