

Speaking notes for Chair James Fromayan, for the LiNCSA-Saferworld side event at CSP2

Liberia has a keener understanding than most about the need for effective control of conventional arms, of their ownership, their use, and their transfer across borders. Our own terrible war was made much worse by the ready supply and movement of weapons within Liberia and from other countries to anyone who wanted them.

It is for this reason we work so closely with our partners on the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms & Light Weapons. It is why we have joined with states from around the world in becoming a State Party to the ATT, and why we have looked in detail at what we need to do to ensure that we are fully compliant with the Treaty. Indeed, we have already begun to move in this direction: our new Firearms and Ammunition Control Act explicitly adopts language from Articles 6 and 7 of the ATT.

I am proud to say that Liberia has been a long-time supporter of the Treaty. We were involved in the negotiations, and have some pride in the fact that along with our brothers and sisters in other African states, we played our part in ensuring that the ATT would apply not just to major conventional arms but to SALW and their ammunition. Our President spoke out personally in support of the Treaty during

the negotiations, to an extent unmatched by most other Heads of State. The fact that she is now Chairperson of ECOWAS further places her in a better position to advocate for the domestication of the ATT in full.

Our support for the Treaty has been unwavering. We voted in its favour in the UN in 2013, we signed in June 2013, just one day after it opened for signature, and on 21 April 21 2015we ratified.

This support runs right across Liberian society. The executive, the legislature and civil society are all committed to the object and purposes of the Treaty. One expression of this is that my colleagues on the Liberian delegation at this CSP are Senator Steve Zargo, Chair of the Senate Committee on Defence & Security, and Michael Yorwah, Chair of the Liberian Action Network on Small Arms, who is with me on the panel today and who is himself a member of our National Small Arms Commission.

But to be a full State Party to the Treaty, statements of support and participation at meetings are not enough. It is incumbent on us to implement the Treaty, and the Treaty text is very clear that implementation must take place at the national level. The need for us to act in this regard has become more urgent given that the UN Mission in Liberia is now approaching the final stages of its

withdrawal from the country and that we are once again taking full responsibility for security back into our own hands.

We have begun this process. As mentioned we have a new law on firearms and ammunition—though not on major conventional arms—that takes full account of the ATT. We have submitted our first annual report to the ATT Secretariat, and are in the process of finalising our initial report, which will be submitted [when?].

We have always been aware, however, that there is more to be done to be fully compliant. Which is why we decided to carry out, in cooperation with Saferworld, a thorough assessment of Liberia's current capacity to implement all the provisions of the Treaty.

Last year, we agreed with Saferworld the terms, conditions and parameters of a detailed assessment.

In the first half of this year Saferworld made a series of visits to Liberia. Working closely with the Liberia National Commission on Small Arms (LiNCSA) and with the active input of our civil society partners of the Commission, a thorough analysis of our relevant laws and regulations, systems and practices was carried out.

The product of that work is what you now have in front of you. As you will see, it comprises a short but comprehensive description of our current systems, capacities and practices, compares them to the requirements of the ATT, and identifies where we are already doing what we must, and where implementation gaps exist.

It makes a number of recommendations, of which the most significant or urgent ones include:

- Establishing a legal basis for controlling international transfers of all conventional arms (not just SALW their ammunition and related materials), in the interim through an Executive Order but then through new ATT-specific legislation.
- Developing a cross-government framework and coordinating body/agency for administering the transfer controls system.
- Developing a clear decision-making process for authorizing and refusing particular arms transfers.
- Actively engaging with all ATT institutions.
- Meeting all reporting obligations under the Treaty (which, as mentioned, is already well underway).
- Ensuring that all government agencies importing or holding conventional arms have adequate safe-storage facilities and effective stockpile management procedures.

This may sound like a lot, but as the report makes clear and as I have already touched on, the new Firearms & Ammunition Control Act gives us a strong foundation on which to build the necessary laws and we are already familiar with managing certain arms issues through cross-governmental structures.

It is our firm intention to continue to work towards full implementation, and the recommendations I have already highlighted give us a clear sense of priority, a clear sense of what we need to do next. Our work so far puts us in a good position to move towards full implementation. We are now at the point of setting out an implementation plan which will form the basis of our work into the future.

Liberia however will struggle to implement all the necessary changes on its own. Indeed, it has only been through the generous support of the Norwegian Government that we have come this far. On that note, please allow me to give my sincere thanks for their financial support to this point.

We therefore look forward to working with all interested parties, be they other states, regional organisations or international organisations, or civil society, who might like to consider cooperating with or providing assistance to Liberia. Liberia is not alone in working

through this type of process. Many other states that do not have a history of significant involvement in the arms trade, and especially those with capacity restraints, are facing similar issues.

As I said at the beginning, Liberia as much as any state in the world should be able to appreciate the value of getting proper control over the international trade in arms. And we are keen to play our part in promoting the effective implementation of the Treaty by all UN Member States, which we feel we can best do by demonstrating our own commitment to those same objectives through our own efforts to achieve full implementation.

Related to this, we are well Liberia is not alone in working through this type of process. Many other states that do not have a history of significant involvement in the arms trade, and especially those with capacity restraints, are facing similar issues. We hope that our experience regarding our national assessment might prove of interest to other states, not least to others from our own continent, a point to which Roy will return during his presentation.