



General Statement delivered by South Africa during the 9th Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

21-25 August 2023

Madam President,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Nigeria, on behalf of the African Group.

South Africa welcomes this opportunity and congratulates you, Ambassador Seong-mee YOON of the Republic of Korea, on your presidency of the Ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). South Africa expresses its gratitude to the President, Bureau, fellow members of the Management Committee, Working Group Chairs and Facilitators, as well as to the Secretariat for their hard work, dedication and tireless efforts to prepare for this Ninth Conference of States Parties.

At the global level, the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty remains strongly reliant on the corresponding efforts to establish requisite conventional arms control frameworks at the respective national and regional levels.

South Africa remains hopeful that the African Union Master Roadmap will be able to continue to address obstacles such as the persistence of the illicit transfer of arms that continue to pose serious threats to the African peace and security agenda. Our commitment to Silencing the Guns on the continent and to address the illicit transfers and illegal arms transactions worldwide remains steadfast.

In the interests of time, I will limit my remarks to a limited number of issues relating to the implementation of the ATT.

Madam President,

We commend the exemplary work of the Chair of the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI) Chair, Ambassador Sanchez de Lerin of Spain in guiding the deliberations of this Working Group. South Africa had the honour of facilitating the discussions in the Sub-working Group on Article 9 of the ATT on "Transit or Trans-shipment", which culminated in the development of a Voluntary Guide to implementing this Article. It is the hope of my delegation that this Voluntary Guide will be endorsed by CSP9 as a living document of a voluntary nature, to be reviewed and updated by the Working Group, as appropriate.

My delegation also wishes to thank the Management Committee for its Report and its Draft Proposal on the Review of the ATT Programme of Work. In this regard, we note that the proposal essentially streamlines the intersessional Programme of Work into one in-person Working Group session. While we support a more holistic approach to allow for a progressive consideration of the national implementation practices of States in the work of the WGETI, we wish to note that not all of the current Sub-Working Groups have completed their Workplans.

Since the proposal includes an approach that the WGETI arranges its discussion topics along the lines of the general stages of Treaty implementation, it needs to be seen whether reducing the number of Working Group sessions will allow for sufficient time to consider all these issues. We note that the proposal includes the possibility of livestream options, informal consultations or small group meetings of interested delegations. My delegation could support this approach, provided that it is not exclusive and to the detriment to the full participation of small delegations and those from developing countries. Since the proposal recommends that the proposal be implemented on a trial basis for one year, we reserve the right to revisit this proposal after that period, should it be adopted.

Madam President,

The task of adequately addressing weaknesses and loopholes in their respective national arms control systems is often too insurmountable for developing countries to achieve on their own, without assistance. Any system is as strong as the weakest link. It is for this reason that South Africa has traditionally strongly advocated the need for international cooperation and assistance in the full implementation of Treaty obligations in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. This should follow a considered approach that allows for all ATT State Parties to implement their obligations in a concerted and cooperative manner, in order to prevent the exploitation of States with weaker national controls and enforcement capacity.

Madam President,

We are aware that many States Parties, including those from the developing world, face concrete challenges in implementing their Treaty obligations. South Africa reiterates the importance of the Voluntary Trust Fund and the Sponsorship Programme as being key to enhancing, without prejudice, developing country participation in Treaty awareness that contributes to the effective implementation of the ATT at the respective national levels.

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates that the object and purpose of the Treaty, as embodied in Article 1 of the ATT, will only be achieved when all States Parties move in concert in Treaty implementation and in this regard has confidence that through the decisions adopted at this Conference, we would be able to work towards a productive and successful conclusion of Ninth Conference of States Parties.

Check against delivery

I thank you.