WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING
REPORT OF 16 FEBRUARY 2023 MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1.   On 16 February 2023, the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR) held its first of two planned meetings of the preparatory process towards the Ninth Conference of States Parties (CSP9) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The meeting was facilitated by the ATT Secretariat as an interim arrangement, because, at the time of the meeting, no eligible and willing State Party had been secured to assume the role of (co-) Chair of the Working Group.

2.   The WGTR adopted the draft annotated agenda for the meeting, which was based on the standing agenda items and the recurring and specific tasks for the WGTR endorsed by States Parties at CSP8. The WGTR also considered the introductory paper for the meeting, which provided the background of the given tasks, summarized past proposals and discussions, set out elements for discussion and put forward proposals for consideration by WGTR participants.

3.   In the report below, the ATT Secretariat included a detailed overview of the discussions per each agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 1: STATE OF PLAY OF COMPLIANCE WITH REPORTING OBLIGATIONS AND CHALLENGES CONCERNING REPORTING

4.   Under the first agenda item, the Working Group reviewed the status of reporting based on a [presentation by the ATT Secretariat](#). The presentation demonstrated that many States Parties have not met their legal obligation to submit initial and annual reports under Article 13 of the ATT. For the 2021 annual report, this amounts to 42 States Parties not fulfilling their obligation.

5.   Some States Parties that have not fully met their reporting obligations under the Treaty shared the challenges they face in submitting annual reports, which related to difficulties to collect relevant data in time and a lack of capacity and awareness in relevant agencies. Three of these States did indicate that they were in the process of preparing their outstanding reports. Also States that have always complied with reporting obligations indicated that inter-agency cooperation and reporting on time can be a challenge, which led to the clarification that submitting reports after the annual deadline of 31 May remains possible.

6.   To address these challenges, participants emphasized the need for assistance, which other participants kindly offered their assistance, for example, via utilization of tools developed within the Working Group. Some participants also shared the efforts they have undertaken to assist other States in the context of regional outreach programs, thereby furthering the outreach strategy on reporting that was adopted at CSP4. A proposal was also made to facilitate reporting by States with limited export/import profile by making available simplified versions of the ATT reporting templates.

7.   As the last specific task under the first agenda item, participants discussed the proposed way forward with the project of voluntary practical bilateral and regional assistance with reporting (peer-to-peer). This would involve the ATT Secretariat identifying States willing and able to assume the role of regional champions on reporting by supporting States Parties in their region experiencing challenges with ATT reporting .

8.   Participants were generally positive about this proposal. Some requested further details about the expectations of regional champions other emphasized the need to identify regional champions with a strong record on reporting.

AGENDA ITEM 2: SUBSTANTIVE REPORTING AND TRANSPARENCY ISSUES UNDER ARTICLE 13 OF THE ATT

9.   Under the second item on the agenda, participants were invited to exchange practices, challenges and limitations concerning substantive issues about the reporting obligations that could benefit from consideration by the WGTR.

10.   Concerning synergies with other reporting obligations, participants are pleased with the initial results of the use of the tick-box in the ATT Annual Reporting Template, allowing UNODA to use the information in the Annual Report for the purpose of UNROCA. Exploring synergies with UNROCA and potentially other fora remains a priority for many participants.

11.   Concerning the public availability of annual and initial reports, intervening participants encouraged all States Parties to make their annual reports publicly available as far as possible, and called on those States Parties restricting their reports to States Parties only to share the reasons behind this approach.

12.   As no proposals were submitted for alterations or additional questions and answers for the 'FAQ'-type guidance document on the annual reporting obligation, this topic was not discussed.

AGENDA ITEM 3: TRANSPARENCY ISSUES AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Information Exchange Platform

13.   Under the third agenda item, participants were requested to consider the continuing role of the Information Exchange Platform (IEP), based on questions included in the introductory paper for the meeting. Intervening participants acknowledged the need for a platform that allows exchanges between States Parties, with one participant specifically referring to information on illicit transfers. Following this, reference was made to the DIEF Terms of Reference, which encourages all States Parties and signatory States to share concrete diversion-related information through the Information Exchange Platform.

14.   In view of the limited responses to the questions on the role of IEP and the importance of the topic going forward, participants were strongly requested to submit their views in writing to the ATT Secretariat.

Online reporting tool

15.   As a second task under agenda item three, participants discussed the use of the online reporting tool as a format to submit reports, as this use is very limited. Two States Parties consistently using the tool to submit their annual reports encouraged others to do the same.

Online searchable database

16.   As the last specific task under the third agenda item, participants shared their views on the way forward concerning the project of an online searchable database. On this topic, participants were asked to indicate whether they want to move the project forward and mandate the ATT Secretariat to obtain cost estimates of a searchable database according to the technical parameters presented in the introductory paper, or take the topic off the WGTR agenda.

17.   As in previous meetings, intervening participants were mostly positive about the general idea of a searchable database, but had divergent views on the technical parameters. Multiple participants acknowledged that the technical parameters presented were a good basis for the ATT Secretariat to obtain cost estimates of a searchable database. Some, however, pointed to a number of issues that could have a significant impact on the cost, such as the likely burden on the ATT Secretariat in terms of the manual input of data from reports that are not submitted via the online reporting tool (which are the vast majority of reports)..

18.   Because only a few participants expressed themselves on this topic during the meeting, participants were requested to submit their views in writing to the ATT Secretariat, so that a more broadly informed decision on the way forward could be taken.

NEXT STEPS

19.   In terms of next steps, the ATT Secretariat will consider all comments and suggestions that have been made about the topics under discussion, in particular the bilateral and regional assistance with reporting (peer-to-peer), the Information Exchange Platform and the online searchable database.

20.   Regarding the bilateral and regional assistance project, the ATT Secretariat will move forward as discussed and report back to the Working Group in May.

21.   Specifically in regard to the Information Exchange Platform and the online searchable database, stakeholders are encouraged to answer the questions that were posed on these topics in writing to the ATT Secretariat, so that informed decisions on these topics can be taken.

22.   For the May meeting, the ATT Secretariat will also prepare a proposal for the mandate of the Working Group in the period between CSP9 and CSP10. In that respect, participants are also invited to submit any proposal in writing to the ATT Secretariat.

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