



Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

High Level Opening Panel

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Mr. President, Distinguished delegates,

I am honored to be here with you today speaking on behalf of my organization, Cameroon Youths and Students forum for Peace -- and on behalf of the Control Arms Coalition.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to you, Mr President, your team and the ATT Secretariat for your efforts in organizing the Seventh Conference of States Parties to the ATT, in spite of the many challenges you faced this year. We congratulate you on your efforts to ensure transparency and the inclusivity of all ATT stakeholders in the CSP process, in line with the purpose of the ATT. We would also like to express our gratitude to the ATT Secretariat for their consistent and reliable coordination support.

Mr. President,

The thematic focus chosen for the CSP7 - curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, with a specific focus on stockpile security - is critical to our region. The impact of the illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms in Africa cannot be over emphasized. It is evident in the number of ongoing conflicts including in the Sahel, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic; in the rise of terrorism and violent extremism in Lake Chad Basin, deadly election-related violence, secessionist agitations, and ethno-political militancy. Less evident is the fact that the illicit proliferation of arms has set back progress towards sustainable development in the region by decades.

Overcoming obstacles to preventing the illicit trade in small arms, in Africa and beyond, requires a concerted effort by all states involved in the arms transfer chain. The ATT, through its provisions on diversion prevention, record keeping and reporting and international cooperation, provides a strong legal framework for regulating the trade of arms and ammunition. But it is up to you - the states present here today - to, without exception, adhere to legal obligations under the Treaty and fulfil its promise of reducing human suffering. By adopting the highest possible standards and by establishing rigorous structures to regulate the global arms trade, you can make a difference in the lives of millions of people around the world.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates

Civil society is as active as ever in mobilizing governments, regions and the public to take concrete steps toward effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. We are ready to engage and assist in your efforts to bolster cooperation and assistance, highlight the importance of stockpile security and to explore synergies with other relevant international and regional instruments.

Civil society is uniquely positioned to work in support of robust Treaty universalization and implementation on behalf of those who need it -- those who are suffering from the scourge of conflict and gun violence. My organization, in partnership with the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa



(RECSA), has worked to raise awareness and mobilize relevant entities to address the consequences of small arms proliferation. As part of these efforts, we sought to advance the universalization and implementation of the ATT, by strengthening capacity and expertise among regional stakeholders and by highlighting synergies with relevant frameworks. With support from the Voluntary Trust Fund, in 2018 we were able to play a leading role in supporting Cameroon to become the 96th State Party to the ATT. Similarly, with support from UNSCAR - one of the few multilateral funding sources available directly to civil society - my organization provided technical assistance in the ECCAS region towards the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention, the UN Program of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, and by encouraging data collection for Sustainable Development Target 16.4.2. During the Africa Amnesty month, we have provided support to government stakeholders in enhancing public security through weapons collection and destruction programmes and the implementation of adequate stockpile management practices.

Examples of successful civil society contributions like ours in support of the ATT can be found across all regions. I would like to take this opportunity to urge you to take advantage of civil society expertise and support available to you. But I also wish to encourage you to provide the necessary assistance to civil society to enable us to continue to support the universalization and implementation of the ATT. Direct assistance to civil society - in addition to grants requiring a government partnership - is key to the development and implementation of many worthwhile projects. Civil society leadership provides opportunities for governments that may be unable to support or sustain a project, to make progress toward becoming a State Party or to set a path toward effective ATT implementation on the national and regional levels.

Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of my organization and Control Arms, I urge you to engage in the Arms Trade Treaty. Become a State Party, if you have not. Report with transparency on your arms exports and imports, if you have not. Anchor the export risk assessment into your national policies, if you have not. Communicate with all actors along the arms transfer life cycle to ensure that weapons are safely transported and stored, and stay out of the hands of those who would misuse them. And lastly -- in this ever-changing world, review your own arms transfer decisions again and again, to ensure that none will violate the provisions of the ATT. With this type of consistent engagement from all of us, together, we can achieve the purpose of the treaty: to reduce human suffering.

Thank you for your attention!