



BELGIUM

Arms Trade Treaty Sixth Conference of States Parties (17-21 August 2020)

Mr President,

Belgium congratulates Argentina, and yourself Mr. President, on your assumption of the Presidency of the 6th Conference of States parties of the Arms Trade Treaty. My country assures you of its full support in your important work.

Belgium aligns itself with the statement presented by the European Union and would like to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

Extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary measures. For this reason, we supported the decision to hold this CSP6 via written procedure as an exceptional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, even with the limitations it entails vis-à-vis the exchanges that make our Conference and its working groups fora for lively discussions between all ATT stakeholders. We therefore emphasize that this exceptional format should remain the exception and that we should return to the regular set-up of in-person meetings when possible. We should, however, not forget the benefits of intersessional remote consultations, for example via the Information Exchange Platform on the ATT website, which could potentially be complemented with a public part to allow additional exchanges among all ATT stakeholders.

Within this extraordinary format, Belgium also welcomes the States who participate in this Conference as new States Parties, or who are soon to become States Parties.

As to the decisions that States Parties will take during the written CSP6, Belgium first and foremost expresses its support for the continuation of the contract of the current Head of the ATT Secretariat, Mr. Dumisani Dladla, for a second term. Belgium commends Mr. Dladla for his excellent work in the past four years and warmly thanks him for the attentive support and guidance that he has given us in our capacity as co-chair of the working group on transparency and reporting (WGTR). We look forward to continuing working with him on the many challenges that still lie ahead of us.

Concerning the substantive work of the Conference and its working groups, we welcome the modified work plans for the different sub-working groups of the Working Group on Treaty Implementation (WGETI). The work in these sub-working groups concerns the essence of what the Treaty requires of our Conference of States Parties – namely, considering and adopting recommendations regarding the implementation and operation of the Treaty, and considering issues arising from the interpretation of the Treaty. This

requires meaningful substantive discussions, and in that respect, Belgium especially looks forward to kickstarting the work in the sub-working group on article 9, which concerns a key obligation of the Treaty.

Particularly on transparency and the activities of the WGTR, Belgium first expresses its disappointment that the initiatives it has taken as WGTR co-chair to encourage and assist non-reporting States to submit their mandatory reports have not yet led to an increase in reporting compliance. In that respect, Belgium reiterates that while we understand that reporting requires capacity and resources, we expect that States joining this Treaty share a commitment to its purposes, of which transparency is an important one. In practice, this means complying with the clear and binding reporting obligations. We also reiterate that not doing so shows a lack of commitment to the Treaty. For that reason, Belgium will continue to work on bringing this message to non-reporting States and to encourage them to use the available support tools to prepare their initial and annual reports.

Secondly, Belgium stresses the importance of having meaningful discussions on substantive issues and concerns that States and other stakeholders raise about reporting. This is the *raison d'être* of the WGTR, and Belgium therefore calls on all States Parties to commit to discussions on, in particular, the public availability of reports and the reporting templates.

Third, concerning the Diversion Information Exchange Forum, Belgium wishes to recall that the establishment of this Forum as a body for States Parties and signatory States is a response to recurring discussions over the past years on how States Parties should deal with the obligations and encouragements in the Treaty regarding information exchange and international cooperation aimed at preventing and addressing diversion in practice. The idea to create a forum for operational exchanges was enthusiastically received during the CSP4 cycle and continued receiving broad support throughout the process to effectively establish such a body. Now that CSP6 will formalize the Forum as a subsidiary body of the CSP, it is time for States Parties and signatory States to transform their words of enthusiasm and support into action. In that respect, we want to emphasize that while the information exchange in the Forum is obviously voluntary, it is firmly rooted in the object and the operational articles of the Treaty. Belgium therefore fully supports the call of the WGTR co-chairs to States Parties and signatory States to actively use the Forum for its intended purposes, in the spirit of promoting constructive discussion and international cooperation. More broadly on the role of information exchange in the prevention of diversion, Belgium also welcomes the recommendations in the working paper presented by the President.

Finally, Mr. President, Belgium remains deeply concerned over the financial situation of the Treaty. We reiterate that the full and timely payment of national contributions is the only sustainable option and we strongly urge States in arrears and late payers to fulfill their financial duties as a token of their strong political commitment to the object and purpose of this Treaty. We support the proposed procedure that seeks to establish the necessary arrangements for States in arrears to settle their financial obligations and we thank your Mr. President as well as the management committee for your active engagement on financial matters.