

Seventh Conference on State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

Geneva, 30 August – 03 September 2021

Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria

Agenda Item 6 “Treaty Implementation”

(Tuesday, 31 August, 13:00 – 16:00 hours)

Mr. President,

Since this is the first time, my delegation is taking the floor, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties. We thank you for your skillful stewardship and wish you further success.

The Republic of Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the EU member states. Allow me, however, to stress on several considerations in our national capacity.

This year’s topic of our debate, as suggested by you, Mr. President, concerns aspects lying at the very heart of our Treaty. We welcome your choice and we hope that the goal you have set in your paper, namely to engage all States Parties of the ATT, will be reached, thus providing for a truly tangible outcome of our deliberations.

We share your view, that for the ATT to be efficient, it has to provide for “a sustained, integrated and collaborative approach towards addressing the problems of the illicit trade in conventional arms, including SALW, by ensuring accountable and transparent arms export control systems and enhancing safe and secure accounting, storage and disposal of weapons by States”.

We also share your understanding that “strengthening cooperation for the effective implementation of the ATT means preventing diversion in the post-delivery phase”, the latter one being one of the major challenges in the course of the practical implementation of the provisions of the ATT.

Stockpiles Security and Management are major risk assessment elements in that process. They can play a crucial role in preventing diversion, but only, if applying respective criteria in same or similar manner.

One possible way towards a harmonized approach could be through the introduction and promotion of risk assessment criteria. Another way could be through sharing of national implementation practices and exchange regarding practical implementation measures.

In that regard, Mr. President, we understand the topic suggested by you as a very good start of a more thorough and comprehensive consideration of the whole topic of diversion. Stockpile management, represents the end of the delivery chain when elaborating on the overall process of export control of conventional weapons. Harmonized approaches and common understandings with regard to risk criteria could and should play a key role when assessing the potential for diversion by trying to mitigate and prevent diversion from occurring throughout the whole delivery process.

EU Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP from 8 December 2008 provides for comprehensive criteria applied by EU MS when assessing applications for the export of conventional arms. These criteria constitute a set of practical benchmarks to be taken into account by national export control authorities when assessing applications for arms exports. We are of the view that a discussion regarding the criteria applied by ATT States Parties when assessing diversion risks and related threats would significantly enrich our deliberations and provide for new incentives for accession, but also for new approaches when discussing the genuine causes for diversion. Such a discussion could potentially contribute to an early prevention of exports towards countries of final destination where export control criteria are questionable or vague or do not exist at all, including with regard to safety and security of stockpiles.

The abovementioned discussion can contribute further towards the goal of turning the ATT into the key international instrument for the establishment of highest possible common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms, thus preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion, as also emphasized in the EU statement.

The above process will significantly help the ATT to start playing its crucial role in complementing the UN Programme of Action on the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and the International Tracing Instrument, and would contribute more broadly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Strengthening the role played by the ATT continues to be the subject of enhanced and comprehensive dialogue among states on their day-to-day practices and policies and the involvement of industry and civil society towards more openness, transparency and understanding regarding what it takes in real terms in order to prevent diversion.

Thank you for your attention!

Geneva, 31 August 2021