

## Arms Trade Treaty 4<sup>th</sup> Conference of States Parties

### Australian Comments on Treaty Universalisation

Mr President

First, we wish to thank you and Ambassador Korhonen for your leadership of efforts on Arms Trade Treaty universalisation and discussions in the Working Group on Universalisation over the past year. We support your recommendations for the Presidency and working group's future work on universalisation, and the documents you have proposed to support this.

Full universalisation of the Arms Trade Treaty is a key priority for Australia. Only by increasing the number of States Parties and implementing the Treaty fully can we realise the full benefits of the ATT. Mr President, we welcome your advocacy and outreach efforts in support of universalisation, including his visits to Africa and Asia. We congratulate Brazil, Kazakhstan, Palestine, Chile and Cameroon for ratifying or acceding to the ATT since the last Conference of States Parties, bringing to 96 the number of States Parties.

Progress is being made, but more work is required. According to data generated by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 12 of the top 20 largest defence exporters in 2017 were parties to the ATT, a further four were signatories, and four had not taken any steps to join. Regarding defence imports for 2017, only five of the top 20 were ATT parties, a further three were signatory, and 13 had not taken any action to join.

Convincing these major importers and exporters to join the ATT is essential to promoting responsible international trade in arms while combatting the illicit trade. We must continue to advocate the benefits of participation for all countries in the transfer chain. Our compendium – *Reinvigorating the Narrative: The Broader Benefits of the Arms Trade Treaty* – that we produced with the Centre for Armed Violence Reduction and launched last year, sets out comprehensively these benefits. We note this could be one useful source to draw upon in the development of the ATT Universalisation Toolkit you have proposed.

When promoting the ATT it is important to take both a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approach. Civil society and NGOs play an important role in

awareness raising at the grass-roots level; technical assistance and capacity building workshops are useful for creating momentum within the bureaucracy, but high-level political endorsement is also crucial. When conducting our outreach, it is important we focus on each of these and identify opportunities for advocacy.

Our work this week, and the outcomes we reach, will be important to demonstrate the practical and positive impacts of the ATT in terms of preventing conflict, reducing the risk of human rights violations, and supporting the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The substantive work currently underway on preventing diversion to unauthorised uses or users is one such example of making a practical impact. This is a central objective of the ATT. For arms exporters, minimising diversionary risk in end-user countries provides greater confidence when considering defence export applications. For arms importers, strong anti-diversionary measures ensures the arms do not end up in the hands of terrorists, insurgents or criminals.

Some states raise legitimate capacity concerns as a reason for not joining the ATT. However, states can join the ATT and then work towards full implementation, availing themselves of the support offered through the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund.

Earlier this year we were pleased to co-sponsor with New Zealand a Pacific Conference on Conventional Weapons Treaties, which sought to advance the implementation of the ATT in the Pacific. A number of Pacific states indicated they were undertaking Cabinet or Parliamentary processes to seek approval for accession, while others were at an earlier stage of consideration. All participants recognised the merits of a region-wide adoption of the ATT. We look forward to working closely with our Pacific neighbours in support of these efforts.

Australia firmly believes a widely-endorsed and implemented ATT has the potential to evolve into one of the most important normative initiatives supporting global efforts to prevent the illicit trade in conventional arms.

Thank you Mr President.