



## Statement by New Zealand

### Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

August 2020

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Mr President,

New Zealand welcomes and congratulates you, Ambassador Villegas of Argentina, on your election as President of the Sixth Conference of States Parties even amidst the current trying and unprecedented circumstances we face. It is indeed most unfortunate that the covid-19 pandemic has made it impossible to hold the Sixth Conference of States Parties in the usual format this year and that it has, accordingly, prevented us from working with you face-to-face.

We do acknowledge, however, that whilst it may have constrained the *manner* in which we explore global solutions, the pandemic has reinforced the importance of our doing so - and has served to underscore the need for multilateral efforts, in particular in respect of those issues that extend beyond national borders and impact all of us.

One such issue is certainly the establishment and implementation of a gold standard system to regulate the international transfer of conventional arms - one that serves to eradicate illicit transfers of arms, and to prevent their diversion. Our Treaty seeks to pursue each of these aims - and to secure, for *all* States and regions, the attendant security and developmental benefits.

New Zealand welcomes the advances made toward **universalisation** of the ATT over the past year with six States having joined our ranks since the Fifth Conference of States Parties. We warmly congratulate them all: the Maldives, Namibia, China, Sao Tome and Principe, Afghanistan, as well as New Zealand's near neighbor, Niue. It is heartening that the number of States Party continues to increase so steadily: our membership now stands at a landmark 110 States. This is certainly an excellent achievement in the relatively short lifetime of the ATT, and a testament to the importance of our aspirations and the value of the Treaty and its regulatory framework.

That said, in order for our Treaty to achieve its full potential we must continue our work toward its universalisation and toward its full and effective implementation globally. We thank the co-chairs of the Working Group on Universalisation for their efforts to this end and encourage all outreach to, and engagement with, non-States Party possible during this constrained time (even where that requires creative thinking!).

In terms of outreach on our own part, as in previous years New Zealand has continued close and regular bilateral engagement with partners in our region, the Pacific. Key objectives of this outreach are to increase general awareness of the ATT, to openly discuss any obstacles that might be faced in joining it, and to offer any assistance that would be useful in overcoming any such obstacles. Our outreach continues in 2020, now in a virtual format, with States which have the capacity to engage with us at this time. We would also like to remind States and observers that the model legislation produced by New Zealand with the Small Arms Survey in order to assist prospective States Parties in preparing for their membership continues to be available, both [online](#) and in hard copy. Please feel free to contact the New Zealand Mission in Geneva, or the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Wellington directly or via your Embassies there.

On the implementation front, we welcome the excellent work of the Chair and facilitators on the Working Group on Effective Treaty **Implementation** and its sub-working groups. Our Treaty sets strong standards. It prohibits certain transfers, provides for export-related assessments, seeks to reduce the security risk of transit and transshipment, and prevents diversion. In realising its objectives, and in ensuring its ongoing credibility, we must all meet the Treaty's standards. In this regard, we are grateful for the President's paper on the important issue of the role of transparency and the exchange of information in preventing diversion.

**Transparency** serves an important confidence-building function within the Treaty - most obviously through both the 'initial' and the annual reporting requirements. It is a matter of regret that reporting rates have fallen this year although we can understand that the pandemic may, for those with limited resources, have temporarily displaced the ability to meet this obligation. In any event, we note the very good efforts on this topic by the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting under its esteemed co-chairs. It remains New Zealand's view, however, that, given low levels of reporting even before the pandemic, there would be considerable merit to considering what we can do - in practical terms - to make reporting more straightforward, especially for those smaller states with exceptionally constrained human and financial resources. In many cases, those governments may only need to make a nil return. We believe it would be very useful to explore what may be possible in this regard.

Since CSP5, New Zealand has had the privilege of acting as Chair of the Selection Committee for the **Voluntary Trust Fund** which is charged with supporting projects to improve Treaty implementation. It is testament to the strong regard in which our Treaty is held that 28 States Parties have to date generously contributed to the VTF. This year, the Selection Committee conducted its annual meeting virtually (in May) and approved 12 projects (from 23 applications). These approvals have been made subject to applicants being able to provide an appropriate risk mitigation strategy that sets out the measures they will implement to ensure their project meets covid-19 health and safety guidelines.

Since assuming the position as Chair, New Zealand has placed priority on improving understanding about the role of the VTF and assisting would-be VTF applicants with quality applications. To this end, we have conducted outreach on the VTF in both Geneva and New York, and ensured that the website now includes examples of completed applications to help applicant States better understand the Selection Committee's expectations.

New Zealand is also currently creating a series of short instructional videos that address common pitfalls in the application process to ensure that applicants can maximise their chances of success. Specifically, we are finalising three videos: one on an introduction to the VTF; one on how to complete the Grant Application Form; and one with tips for completing the Budget Form. These videos will shortly be available on the VTF section of the Treaty's website. We hope they will prove to be a useful resource for VTF applicants.

Finally, New Zealand would like to recognise the tireless work of the non-governmental representatives that continue to play a crucial role in ensuring the success of the ATT. The role of civil society in raising awareness of our Treaty's aims and in supporting its implementation is often left uncredited – and should not be.

We also extend our deep appreciation to the staff of the ATT Secretariat – who provide a full range of outstanding administrative support, excellently managing the Treaty's finances, administering the Sponsorship Programme and also the VTF – all to a very high standard. We also note that in addition they have this year made arrangements for this Sixth Conference of States Parties to proceed notwithstanding the outbreak of a global pandemic.

We look forward to continuing working with you all towards the full implementation and universalisation of our Treaty.