



Eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

Statement by Aotearoa New Zealand

22 - 26 August 2022

Thank you, Mr President.

Aotearoa New Zealand thanks you, Ambassador Göbel, for your hard work to guide the work of the Arms Trade Treaty over the past twelve months. We thank you for this, and assure you of the New Zealand delegation's full support as you successfully conclude your term.

The New Zealand delegation greatly appreciates the efforts that have gone into preparing for this year's CSP – including by the Secretariat. It's great to be meeting in-person once more, with the full participation of civil society, and all the dynamism that can bring to a process like ours.

Mr President, since our Treaty entered into force in 2014, we have seen 111 States join the Treaty, while in total 130 have signed and are on the way to fully-fledged membership. This is a significant achievement, in the relatively short lifetime of the Arms Trade Treaty, and a testament to the important humanitarian and security benefits derived from our Treaty.

New Zealand has long been a supporter of efforts to universalize the Arms Trade Treaty, and we warmly congratulate the Philippines on becoming the most recent State Party to join.

In New Zealand's own region, the Pacific, there is broad recognition that universalization of the ATT provides important security and developmental benefits, and is thus in the strong interests of Pacific States. *[And I think you can see that proven here this week, with strong participation from Pacific delegations]*. To that end, New Zealand has been pleased to continue outreach efforts with Pacific partners in recent years – including this year for an annual Asia-Pacific Roundtable that was generously hosted by the Permanent Mission of Japan, and co-organised by Australia, New Zealand and Control Arms. These roundtables aim to better elaborate the obstacles faced by prospective States Parties from the Asia-Pacific region and offer assistance in overcoming any challenges those States might be facing. In New Zealand's view, if the political desire exists to join a treaty like the Arms Trade Treaty, we should be collectively ensuring that the practical support is there to assist that country to join. And the Voluntary Trust Fund – to which I will turn shortly – is an essential tool in this regard.

And while it's of course incumbent upon us to do all we can to support efforts towards universalization, in order to ensure the Treaty achieves its full potential, it is also clear that we face a more contested multilateral calendar than ever before, which means that several states have very limited capacity to engage in new areas.

Taking this on board, New Zealand welcomes the work of the Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Treaty Universalization – and, in particular, their efforts to put forward constructive ideas on ways to advance Treaty universalization while bearing in mind the limited capacity of many delegations. New Zealand is interested in further exploring the initiatives identified in the Working Group’s “Initial Considerations” paper, and supports provision of a mandate for the Working Group to take this work forward. We agree that the Working Group’s efforts might be better supported through a longer-term approach to universalization efforts and promoting the ATT’s benefits, which might also better assist prospective States Parties in their ratification or accession processes.

Among all the other priority work areas, we must continue to champion the Treaty’s universalization, by thinking of creative ways to promote the ATT’s benefits, to understand the challenges to universalization, by responding to the concerns of states outside the Treaty, and providing support where it is required – including through the Voluntary Trust Fund. In New Zealand’s view, this should be among our top priorities as a Treaty community.

Mr President,

Our Treaty sets strong standards. It prohibits certain transfers, provides for export-related assessments, seeks to reduce the security risks around transit and transshipment, and prevents diversion. In realising its objectives, and in ensuring its ongoing credibility, we must all strive to meet the Treaty’s standards.

As some of you may know, New Zealand recently conducted a review of its export control system, reflecting public and political interest in our export assessment process. The findings of the independent review, released in 2021, found that while the New Zealand Government administered its export control regime consistent with domestic and international obligations (and these include, of course, those in the Arms Trade Treaty) as well as other commitments - the design and implementation of the system fell short of contemporary best practice in certain respects.

The independent review has allowed for a range of recommendations that will enable the export controls system to be modernised to ensure it is consistent with best practice. These recommendations include:

- reviewing and refreshing the criteria for assessment;
- investing in more structured and comprehensive systems and processes;
- enhancing the transparency and public confidence in the regime; and
- extending proactive outreach and education.

New Zealand places great importance on ensuring that our export control regime remains fit for purpose. Implementing the recommendations made by the independent review remains a high priority for New Zealand and we are currently consulting on a proposed approach to doing just that. We look forward to being in a position to share further updates with interested States Parties in due course.

Finally, we know that – for some States – international cooperation and assistance will be essential to enable full and effective treaty implementation. New Zealand has had the privilege of acting as Chair of the Selection Committee for the Voluntary Trust Fund since late 2019. This year, the Selection Committee held its annual meeting virtually in May and provisionally approved six projects, from among 15 applications.

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. We thank all of those who have contributed to, and applied for, VTF support and encourage all ATT stakeholders to explore all possible avenues for promoting and supporting this Fund. While New Zealand’s term on the

committee has come to a conclusion, we continue to encourage those states with an interest in advancing their domestic treaty implementation to submit Fund applications.

To assist prospective applicant states with top tips in formulating project applications, and explaining the merits of applying under the VTF, New Zealand has over the last two years developed four instructional videos that you can find on the ATT website. I encourage you to look these up if your government is interested in applying for VTF funding.

I thank you.

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