

New Zealand General Debate Statement
Arms Trade Treaty
First Conference of States Parties, Cancun, 24-27 August 2015
Delivered by H.E. Dell Higgie, Ambassador for Disarmament

President Lomonaco, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

May I begin by congratulating the Government of Mexico on the excellent headway which has been made under your stewardship, Ambassador Lomonaco, and that of your colleagues in the lead up to this first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Our Treaty has moved quickly through a number of significant milestones: from its opening for signature in June 2013, to entry into force in December 2014, and now, in August 2015, the convening of this Conference of States Parties. Clearly, such momentum reflects widespread international agreement that too many weapons have crossed too many borders without regulation for far too long.

For decades, complex rules have governed the trade in 'normal goods' like butter and bananas whilst the trade in arms has remained largely outside global rules. Notwithstanding how important butter and bananas may be for many of our economies, they certainly seem considerably less in need of regulation than guns and tanks.

From the time when negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty were first launched at the United Nations General Assembly in 2009, New Zealand's goal was to push for the conclusion not just of *any* Treaty - but for a strong and meaningful one.

Mexico was our constant partner in this endeavour, along with many others including from CARICOM and Africa – all of us alarmed at the threat to life and development

which has long been the hallmark of unconstrained and unregulated access to weapons in many regions.

The Arms Trade Treaty now rectifies the glaring absence of global standards on arms transfers. It provides us with a strong platform to ensure that the global trade in conventional arms is conducted in a responsible manner. In time - to paraphrase Archbishop Desmond Tutu's words - it should no longer be easier in *any* part of the world to buy a machine gun than to make a doctor's appointment.

In the period since the Treaty's entry into force, Mexico has led the effort to back the Treaty's text with the strong framework necessary to give reality to its provisions.

We can all think of international bodies or treaties with mandates that remain unfulfilled - their action hamstrung by antiquated rules of procedure or ineffective institutional arrangements. Certainly, there are cautionary tales of this sort from the world of disarmament. The ATT, too, will come to mean little, in practice, if we do not put in place strong governance rules and an effective institution overseeing its implementation.

We are therefore pleased that the Rules of Procedure we are adopting here will ensure that our Treaty regime is effective most notably in terms of decision-making (including on financial matters) and as regards participation. It is particularly important that we ensure the full participation of civil society in assisting us with its implementation - just as we relied on them throughout the Treaty's negotiation.

Our Secretariat will also be key to the Treaty's implementation. Last year, Foreign Minister McCully announced New Zealand's support for Port of Spain as its venue - and we remain firmly of the view that Trinidad and Tobago would provide a committed and supportive base for an effective Secretariat.

International standards are strongest when they are universally applied. So we must continue to push for universalisation of the ATT and we must minimise the barriers to participation.

New Zealand is keenly aware that the Asia-Pacific, our own region, has been slowest to join the Treaty. New Zealand will continue to encourage and support regional partners to move towards ratification. The ATT model legislation, drafted by New Zealand and the Small Arms Survey, identifies what it is that countries must have on their law books in order to fulfil the terms of the Treaty. Our model provides drafting that can easily be customised to suit individual circumstances. For us, the Model Law was a logical way to ensure that States keen to join the ATT are not deterred by the obligation to develop new legislation.

To achieve universalisation, we must also bear in mind the need to balance transparency and effectiveness in our reporting requirements. The ATT will stand or fall on its ability to help States regulate, control, and report accurately and transparently on the movement of weapons across their borders. Reporting templates must be flexible enough to cover both large countries with significant arms industries as well as micro-states with small public services and few, if any, transfers to report each year. Reporting templates must also be simple and easy to use, and clearly differentiate between mandatory and voluntary requirements so that they do not in any way become a barrier to participation.

The Arms Trade Treaty was many years in the making. New Zealand looks forward to working with our fellow States Parties, as well as all other supporters of the Treaty, to ensure that this Conference delivers something worthy of such an important Treaty: the strong framing for a global regime that will truly support peace, stability and human security.