

## **GOALS NOT GUNS**

### **Arms control, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): how security and stability contribute to development**

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Thankyou, Mr/Ms Chair,

I would like to thank the President of the CSP for inviting Oxfam to be part of this important panel.

Oxfam is a global humanitarian and development NGO confederation that works to alleviate poverty and suffering. 16 years ago, we joined Amnesty International and many other NGOs to launch the Control Arms campaign, and the success of that campaign led to us all gathering here at this third CSP.

People sometimes ask why a poverty reduction NGO would be working on arms control. The answer is simple. Poverty, armed violence and conflict are linked in a cycle that prevents peace, furthers human rights abuses and hampers development. It should be self-evident that there is a strong link between ATT and the SDGs, between controlling illicit arms flows and contributing to peace and development. In that light, it should not even be a topic for discussion. Yet, sadly, it is and I will address this.

Without controlling arms, it is impossible to ensure security. Without security, economic development is impossible. "While the guns pour in, our communities can never be safe", our partners often tell us. In a nutshell, that is the argument that links the ATT to the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals

Both the ATT and the SDGs work through encouraging better governance, and measures that lead to success for one mean success in the other. Security sector reform, transparency in arms transfers and government, parliamentary scrutiny - -all are necessary for achievement of the ATT and SDGs.

Arms control is explicitly referenced, as we know, in SDG Goal 16.4 on controlling illicit arms flows. The relationship between the SDGs and the ATT goes much wider. However, robust implementation of the ATT and Goal 16.4 would underpin achievement of SDGs 1 on reducing poverty; 2 on ending hunger, 4 on good health 5 on reducing gender based

violence, 11 creating sustainable cities and communities, 17 on partnerships, and many more.

This is why Oxfam has spent so many years working for the Arms Trade Treaty, to stop the flow of arms that fuel conflict and poverty. From our experience of humanitarian programming in fragile and conflict affected countries, we have seen the imperative to condemn arms transfers in many contexts Yemen, Syria, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Mali and elsewhere.

The global community has also recognized this link between violence and poverty: *There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development* is a UN mantra. In this context, States need to go beyond the ATT's words and take action. Civil society needs to hold countries accountable for implementation of ATT commitments.

Oxfam's report *The Human Cost of Uncontrolled Arms in Africa* details the fueling of prolonged conflict and inter-community strife characterizing many regions by uncontrolled flows of arms. In the Central African Republic, three years of conflict between the Seleka, the government and anti-Balaka militias has resulted in mass displacement of people and a huge upsurge in Gender Based Violence (GBV), with over 60,000 cases recorded. The economy, already poor, has largely collapsed with 2.4m people dependent on aid. Violence is again reaching levels seen in 2014. This has been made possible by the flow of arms with rebel groups into the country from the north, as well as their illegal circulation with militias inside CAR. In the turmoil, arms have also flowed from CAR feeding conflict in Cameroon, Nigeria and elsewhere. Assisting CAR to implement the ATT and control flows of arms internally and across its borders is essential to ending the conflict. In the current situation, it is clear that the SDGs cannot be achieved unless we take the ATT seriously, and act to ensure that governments abide by their commitments in practice. CAR cannot meet SDG 1 on poverty or 2 on hunger, amongst others, until arms are controlled, and the violence ceases.

In South Sudan, since independence conflict has contributed to the reduction of oil production by around 60% – with much remaining oil revenue spent on arms not development. 3.6m people are displaced, GDP has contracted immensely and the international community has funded over \$4 billion in aid over the past 10 years. Yet arms continue to reach South Sudan seemingly unimpeded. South Sudan will not meet SDGs such as 4 on education or 8 on decent work, or many others, until arms flows are stopped from fueling conflict there.

What can we do?

The ATT's Preamble makes the link between conflict, flows of arms and a lack of development clear. It calls on all governments to *promote the establishment and maintenance*

*of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources, acknowledging that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.*

Properly implemented, with full respect for its provisions by all States Parties, the ATT will strengthen controls on the transfer of arms, in a manner that will promote transparency, while also strengthening governance.

Proper implementation of the ATT is key. Does anyone here think arms supplied to combatants in Yemen have helped build security, or move Yemen towards achievement of the SDGs? 14m are food insecure, with 7m on the verge of famine. 20m lack access to clean drinking water. 620,000 are thought to have cholera, with 2,000 including vulnerable children having died. Infrastructure, including hospitals, roads, bridges, and power generation has been attacked. The UN has recognized serious violations of international humanitarian law, and yet from the US, UK, Iran and elsewhere arms continue to fuel this terrible conflict. Yemen would always have found meeting the SDGs difficult, but now goals such as 3 on health and 6 on clean water are beyond reach until the fighting stops.

The Treaty places an obligation on every State Party to evaluate the risk of the end-use of weapons, and proceed only when the risk of violation of human rights, terrorism or crime is minimal. It requires State Parties to keep records of all arms transfers, and report on them.

Transparency, and providing the legislative, administrative, and legal frameworks that make implementation possible will bring further benefits, allowing States to distinguish much more easily between legal and illicit transfers, making illicit transfers that much easier to prevent.

Parliamentary scrutiny over arms procurement and transfers will bring accountability of government and security forces, enhancing good governance in areas such as customs, stockpile safety and security, civilian oversight of the military, oversight of procurement and others. These measures will close loopholes through which illicit and irresponsible transfers previously flowed, increasing stability and security and facilitating sustainable economic development.

Good governance and accountability are also vital to achieving the SDGs. Development, stability and security go hand in hand. These are areas where cooperation with civil society can be fruitful for States, combining ideas and energy of both is productive for all.

This will not be easy. Many States will need financial and technical assistance to achieve success in ATT implementation. We encourage States with the capacity to do so to assist others to robustly implement the Treaty. In 2015, the total ODA-eligible expenditure on

Security Sector Reform activities, which included activities of direct relevance to ATT implementation, amounted to US\$972 million. We encourage all States to look to see how their ODA can be used to support ATT implementation in ways which will contribute to achievement of the SDGs.

Oxfam and Control Arms have made available a paper which discusses our ideas for mutually reinforcing success in ATT and SDG implementation - *Goals Not Guns: How the Sustainable Development Goals and the Arms Trade Treaty are Interlinked*. We remain committed to working with you toward a world where arms control helps underpin economic development, reduce poverty, suffering and human harm across the globe.