



South African national statement to the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

Thank you, Mr President,

It gives me great pleasure to address this First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) here in the beautiful city of Cancun on behalf of the Government of the Republic of South Africa. I wish to use this opportunity to thank our hosts, the Government and people of Mexico, for the gracious hospitality extended to us. Our two countries and their respective regions have long shared the common vision and its related goals for peace, security, stability, democracy and development.

At the time of the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April 2013, my country underlined the fact that the ATT is an international instrument that fills a glaring gap that existed in the global conventional arms control system. It sets high norms and criteria that States will adhere to when considering arms transfers and will, therefore, also aim to prevent the illicit conventional arms trade.

Mr President,

I am pleased to say that South Africa was actively involved in the ATT process and consistently supported the negotiation of an instrument that is as comprehensive as possible and one that would make a meaningful difference in the international legal arms trade. President Jacob Zuma signed the ATT on 25 September 2013 during the UN General Assembly and my Government deposited its instrument of ratification on 22 December 2014, just prior to the Entry into Force of the Treaty.

South Africa believes that the Treaty will, by regulating the legal trade in conventional weapons, seek to combat the illicit trade in these weapons, which exacerbates conflict and crime, especially in Africa. Its full and effective implementation will tangibly contribute to promoting international and regional peace, security and stability, as well as to reduce human suffering, by addressing the scourge of armed violence, much too often directed at innocent women and children. The swift Entry into Force of the ATT and the large and growing number of States Parties to the Treaty bear testimony to the fact that many countries around the globe share this common aspiration.

Mr President,

A number of important decisions will need to be taken at this First Conference of States Parties, directly related to the future implementation of this Treaty. It is my hope that we will be able to take this opportunity to make real progress of many of these procedural matters in order to pave the way for the further operationalization and universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Central to the success of the Treaty, is ensuring that it has a real effect in setting an international norm to which States adhere and in monitoring the global arms trade. In addition, the ATT's success will also depend on the effectiveness of the Treaty's Secretariat that will assist States Parties in the effective implementation of the Treaty. A strong Secretariat will be essential to ensure that the ATT will be able to deliver in making a meaningful difference in better regulating the global arms trade.

In view of the importance that South Africa attaches to the ATT Secretariat, the South African Government has nominated the Head of the South African National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) Secretariat, Mr SD Dladla, as a candidate for the post of Head of the Secretariat of the Arms Trade Treaty, upon its establishment in terms of Article 18 of the ATT.

Mr Dladla's experience and in-depth knowledge of arms control issues at national, continental and international levels informs the decision to advance his candidature to head the ATT Secretariat. He has worked for over a decade on multilateral conventional arms control issues and has formed part of various South African delegations in negotiations and conferences in the arms control field. In view of Mr Dladla's extensive practical arms control experience and his suitability to head the future ATT Secretariat, my delegation would appreciate the support of delegations for his candidature for this important position.

Mr President,

The central pillar of the ATT is premised on the requirement that prospective States Parties should establish, where they do not already exist, effective national conventional arms transfer control legislation, together with the requisite dedicated conventional arms control systems.

In this regard, South Africa's ratification of the ATT underscores my Government's continued and firm commitment to fulfil its international role as a responsible manufacturer, possessor and trader in conventional arms.

I thank you, Mr President.