



**General Statement to be delivered by South Africa during the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference  
on States Parties of the Arms Trade Treaty**

**22-26 August 2022**

Mr President,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Niger, on behalf of the African Group.

South Africa welcomes this opportunity and congratulates you, Ambassador Gobel, on your presidency of the Eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. South Africa expresses its gratitude to the President, Bureau, fellow members of the Management Committee, Working Group Chairs and Facilitators, as well as to the Secretariat for their hard work, dedication and tireless efforts to prepare for this Eighth Conference of States Parties following the exceptional circumstances caused by the devastating Covid-19 pandemic.

It has also impacted negatively on regional disarmament implementation initiatives, such as the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa.

You will recall that the African Union extended the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap for a period of ten years, from 2020 to 2030. We remain hopeful that the African Union Master Roadmap will be able to continue to identify obstacles such as the persistence of illicit transfers and illegal arms transactions that pose a serious threats to the African peace and security agenda. Our commitment to Silencing the Guns on the continent and to address the illicit transfers and illegal arms transactions worldwide is unwavering.

The Arms Trade Treaty remains an essential element of the international conventional arms control architecture and was established to regulate not only the international trade in conventional arms, but also to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms by establishing international standards governing arms transfers. Although Small Arms and Light Weapons remain the most commonly used weapons in conflicts, especially in Africa, trade in other conventional weapons has been recognized as a contributory factor to the escalation of conflicts. It is therefore important to ensure that all conventional weapons remain our focus.

Mr President,

The proliferation of and trade in conventional arms, exacerbated by, inter alia, inadequate or weak control systems at the respective national levels, destabilises communities, negatively impacts security and compromises development. The full implementation of the ATT and the development of further rules through the respective Working Groups, will, through regulating the legal trade in conventional weapons, combat the illicit trade in conventional weapons. The effective implementation of the ATT will tangibly contribute to promoting international peace, security and stability, socio-economic development and will reduce human suffering, particularly in Africa.

In South Africa's view, the discussions in the respective ATT Working Groups add impetus to the realisation of the goals and the objective of the ATT. The substantive discussions, sharing of experiences and compilation of best practice guides in the Working Groups would greatly serve to encourage and assist States Parties to establish or strengthen their conventional arms control systems, especially for States Parties without such adequate, established and functional arms systems. In this regard, we commend that work that has been carried out by the Working Groups earlier this year and hope that during this week we would be able have thorough deliberations on the Working Groups and their priorities.

The task of adequately addressing weaknesses and loopholes in their respective national arms control systems is often too insurmountable for developing countries to achieve on their own, without assistance. The reality is that unscrupulous arms dealers and brokers will target States with weak export controls and enforcement to organize

the diversion of arms to illegitimate end-users. Any system is as strong as the weakest link. It is for this reason that South Africa has traditionally strongly advocated the need for international cooperation and assistance in the full implementation of Treaty obligations in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and for a measured approach to the development of rules and guidelines to allow for all ATT State Parties to implement at the same speed, in order to prevent the exploitation of States with weaker national controls and enforcement capacity.

Mr President,

We are aware that many States Parties, including those from the developing world, face concrete challenges in implementing their treaty obligations. South Africa reiterates the importance of the Voluntary Trust Fund and the Sponsorship Programme as being key to enhancing, without prejudice, developing country participation in treaty awareness that contributes to universalization and effective implementation of the ATT at the national level. We would like to support and commend the work done by the Chair of the Selection Committee of the ATT's Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) in ensuring that the Treaty's trust fund is implemented in a fair and just manner, more especially fulfilling its mission of assisting lesser-resourced States to put in place their part of the global regulatory framework. As such, South Africa has been a delight to serve in this VTF committee and would appreciate the opportunity of serving again for CSP9. There is no doubt that the discussions in the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI) and the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR) will add impetus to the realization of the goals and the objective of the ATT.

CSP8 will inter alia, consider the Report of the WGETI, which is based on the work of the three Sub-working groups. South Africa is honoured to facilitate the Sub-working group on Article 9 (Transit and trans-shipment) and hope to focus on preparing for a more in-depth look at the measures to regulate the transit and trans-shipment of arms. With regards to the issue of the threat of diversion, South Africa takes note of the President's working paper on *Post-Shipment Controls and Coordination*, however my delegation regrets that this paper was not shared with us on time to be able to discuss its elements and provide substantive inputs.

South Africa supports the continuing work of the WGTR, which includes exchanges concerning the fulfilment of the reporting obligations, as well as discussions on the draft proposed amendments to both the Initial and Annual Reporting templates, taking into account pertinent comments and concerns of States Parties. South Africa always maintained that the intention, and the mandate, of the Working Group was to address the clarifications, user-friendliness issues, gaps and inconsistencies in the current templates and that those promoting amendments to the templates should bear in mind the risks that such an exercise runs in being a deterrent to treaty reporting, which may impact directly on the implementation and universalisation of the ATT.

Mr President,

The universalisation of the ATT would strengthen the norms to effectively regulate the international trade in conventional arms and to prevent their diversion. We wish to welcome and the Philippines to their first CSP. We hope that this will serve as encouragement to all major conventional arms producers and exporters to do the same and we call upon all other States that have not yet become States Parties to the ATT, particularly Signatory States, to take the necessary steps to ratify or accede to the Treaty.

The issue of non-payment of assessed contributions directly affects the overall implementation and operation of the Treaty, however, it needs to be considered in a holistic manner and cannot simply be seen from the prism of an individual State not paying. There needs to be an overall balance in that measures adopted should be considerate of circumstances and not frustrate any other initiatives within the ATT. In this regard, South Africa welcomes the redrafted guidelines on Financial Rule 8 (1) (d) regarding the issue of making financial arrangements with the Secretariat.

In conclusion, South Africa reiterates that the object and purpose of the Treaty will only be achieved when all States Parties move in concert in Treaty implementation and in this regard has confidence that through the decisions adopted at this Conference, we would be able to work towards a productive and successful Eighth Conference of States Parties.

Thank you.