

Arms Trade Treaty



International Parliamentary Seminar | 3 - 5 November 2014

OUTCOME DOCUMENT:

"PARLIAMENTARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE ARMS TRADE TREATY"

Context of the Seminar

The British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union (BGIPU) International Parliamentary Seminar on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) brought together parliamentarians from 17 national parliaments to contribute to a three-day Conference in the Houses of Parliament, Westminster from 3-5 November 2014.

The programme of the Seminar focused on the role of parliamentarians in all aspects of the Treaty; from promoting ratification and universalisation of the ATT, to monitoring and reporting mechanisms, parliamentary oversight and cooperation with civil society and industry actors.

Through bringing together parliamentarians from around the globe, along with representatives of civil society, including leading arms control experts, the Seminar sought to build upon existing momentum surrounding the Treaty as it approaches entry into force, and aimed to increase the knowledge and understanding at parliamentary level of Arms Trade Treaty issues ahead of the establishment of the first Conference of States Parties.

The BGIPU and those present acknowledged and drew reference from previous parliamentary activity on the ATT, including but not limited to, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the work of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Control Arms, Parliamentarians for Global Action and other stakeholders.

Looking ahead to the First Conference of States Parties expected to be held in Mexico in 2015, the parliamentary participants endorsed the following outcome;

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“PARLIAMENTARY PERSPECTIVES ON THE ARMS TRADE TREATY”

Over the course of their discussions the Parliamentarians present at the BGIPU Seminar on the Arms Trade Treaty highlighted the following key perspectives;

Participants reaffirmed their strong support for and commitment to an effective ATT, as representatives of citizens across the globe, for those who have seen their lives lost, or irreparably changed by the irresponsible use of arms.

The Arms Trade Treaty came about through the joint effort and commitment of governments, industry, civil society and parliaments and it is through this continued cooperation and effort that the ATT will continue to be a strong, accountable and effective response to the scourge of the irresponsible use of the arms trade moving forward.

Those present also reaffirmed the parliamentary perspective on the Arms Trade Treaty that upon Entry into force that the Treaty will serve the following purposes;

- It will save lives.
- It will promote sustainable development. It will reduce human suffering by preventing arms being used in serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.
- It will help to combat terrorism and crime by steadily reducing the unfettered proliferation of weapons.
- It will protect the legitimate arms trade, allowing states to access and acquire weaponry to lawfully defend themselves, but it will also ensure that this process is not circumvented, abused or exploited.

Delegates also undertook to return to their national parliaments with a resolve to advance the ATT – be it in terms of encouraging national ratification or more effective implementation or through taking concrete action to raise awareness and understanding of the ATT, its provisions and objectives among parliamentary colleagues.

The Role of Parliamentarians in Legislating for the ATT

- In enacting legislation at a national level for the ATT, Parliamentarians are encouraged to bear in mind the object and purpose of the Treaty and ensure that these principles are upheld in all relevant national legislation.
- Parliamentarians are urged to play an active role in encouraging national governments to sign and ratify the ATT; this could be through exercising the right to initiate legislation without government action, encouraging national governments to initiate new legislation and overseeing government implementation.
- Parliamentarians may share experience and best practice with regard to legislating for ATT ratification through sharing model legislation, model provisions or harmonisation guidelines with parliamentary peers nationally and internationally through bilateral exchanges, regional mechanisms or international parliamentary fora such as the IPU.

The Role of Parliamentarians in Promoting the Universalisation of the ATT

- In addition to their role as legislators, Parliamentarians have a key role to play as active advocates of the ATT.
- In States where the ATT has not yet been signed or ratified, parliamentarians may promote and encourage the swift and efficient passage of any necessary national legislation within their national parliament.
- Parliamentarians can also encourage national governments to implement the ATT to the highest possible level, going beyond basic obligations and embracing the ambitious aims of the Treaty.
- Parliamentarians are encouraged to reach out beyond the parliament in order to foster broad understanding and support for the ATT at a national level.

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The Role of Parliamentarians in Promoting Effective Implementation of the ATT

- Parliamentarians have a vital role to play in ensuring the robust application of the ATT going forward through ensuring effective oversight of national governments actions, consistent with the obligations, object and purpose of the ATT with particular emphasis upon the humanitarian goal of reducing human suffering and ensuring the protection of civilians.
- Whilst many parliaments may have different methods of ensuring oversight, the principle of parliamentary consultation or approval with regards to import, export and transfer of conventional arms covered by the ATT is a common one. Parliamentarians should seek to ensure that these consultations are thorough and uphold the commitments of the ATT.
- Parliamentarians also have a crucial role in calling for government decisions with regard to arms transfers to be reassessed where any relevant information comes to light, and should exercise all functions available to them, such as holding hearings or committee sessions, in order to feel satisfied that the obligations of the ATT are being upheld.

Parliamentary perspectives on the First Conference of States Parties

- Parliamentary participants reaffirm their commitment to ensuring the universalisation of the ATT, and will encourage states wherever possible to ratify the ATT without delay and encourage states to maintain their commitment to a universal ATT in the preparations ahead of and during the Conference of States Parties.
- Those present encourage States Parties and all those involved in the preparatory process to remain committed to the object and purposes of the Treaty in any and all decisions made at the first Conference of States Parties
- Aware of the Treaty articles pertaining to the first Conference of States Parties, Parliamentarians encourage States Parties to take decisions which will lead to a robust and effective Treaty, supported by a capable Secretariat, effective rules of procedure and financing rules.
- Parliamentarians encourage the Conference of States Parties to take decisions upon how Articles 15 & 16 on international cooperation will work in practice. In particular, the needs of parliaments to legislate and oversee the ATT should be considered in the establishment of cooperative mechanisms.
- The Conference of States Parties should consider how parliaments are provided with the necessary capabilities and resources to contribute to upholding the principles and obligations of the ATT, clarify what funding and resources are available and how parliaments can gain access to these.
- Parliamentarians stand ready to assist States Parties and other stakeholders in this and any further process to strengthen the ATT's effective and full implementation, and would therefore encourage States Parties to include parliamentarians in their national delegations to the Conference of States Parties wherever possible.