



Arms Trade Treaty

Second Conference of States Parties, 22 August 2016

High Level Opening Panel: Geoffrey L. Duke, Control Arms

I am a native of South Sudan. A country which saw a peace agreement reached after over two years of bloody civil war. Many of you may remember the peace agreement that was signed almost exactly one year ago, during the time of the first Conference of States Parties.

But arms have continued to flow, and the legacy of conflict lives on. Six months ago, I had a gun pointed at my head as I was leaving my office, on an otherwise normal day. As I waited for the trigger to be pulled, I thought: was has happened to my country?

Just last month, fighting broke out again in South Sudan. It has left hundreds dead and tens of thousands displaced. My country has been devastated by years of deadly civil war. But governments have fuelled this violence, repeatedly authorising weapons to be transferred into South Sudan. So many lives have been lost, so many futures destroyed and the hopes of a whole nation held hostage by armed violence.

It is apparent that some progress is being made in implementation of the ATT. We have seen governments begin to update their national systems. And 16 new States Parties join the ATT in the last year. But it is not enough. Especially not for the millions of civilians who suffer due to violence perpetrated by weapons - transferred with great risk of being used to cause serious human suffering.

Arms continue to flow to war zones – and are used in countries like Yemen against civilians. The humanitarian and human rights situation in these countries illustrate why irresponsible arms transfers must stop. Some states are adhering



to their commitments and stopping the provision of weapons that are contributing to global humanitarian crises, and doing what they can to address humanitarian disasters. But their actions are undermined by other states that continue to supply the arms fuelling these crises.

I would like to also underscore the importance of transparency for the treaty. I don't know where the gun came from that was pointed at my head. Without greater transparency in the arms trade, there is a grave danger of too many weapons continuing to flow into the illicit trade. States must agree on mandatory public reporting this week and bring the arms trade out of the shadows.

The commitments that have been expressed here at the highest levels of government are welcome. But we need more than statements. We need these words to translate into real actions that save lives. These actions are more needed especially for the people of my country. And we need them now.

The people of South Sudan, and so many others in countries plagued by violence and conflict, need meaningful changes now. We cannot wait for the slow churn of bureaucracy, we need positive action this week.

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