



**FOURTH CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ARMS TRADE TREATY
TOKYO, 20 – 24 AUGUST**

**20 AUGUST 2018
OPENING PANEL**

DELIVERED BY: SHOBHA SHRESTHA, WOMEN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY NEPAL

Honourable Minister, Excellencies, Colleagues,

Many women and children in my country Nepal suffered from the armed violence which took place in our country for a decade from the late 1990s, with a cost of more than 13,000 lives and billions of rupees worth of physical property. I work in the rural areas with ex-combatants and civilians, people who suffered from violence from both the revolutionary groups and the government.

I want to tell you two stories today. Sunita is an ex-combatant who joined the Maoist army because in her words *“they promised to address the issues and concerns of the poor, women and marginalized groups.”* But the armed group forced her to cook food before they raped her in front of her family. *“Most of the time I still have flashbacks, I have a gun, I am firing and I am killing. I spent my best years as a rebel in the Maoist army but after the peace agreement, my friends and I are nowhere today. I have no education, no job, nothing and I cannot support my family. What I have is a few bullets still within my body”.*

Sunita’s experience is typical of women ex-combatants who suffered in the conflict fueled by arms, and are struggling now in peacetime.

My second story is from Yemen – a country now into the fourth year of a terrible war, and which my colleague Radya Almutawakel described to you at last year’s CSP.

You have all heard about the horrific bombing of a school bus two weeks ago in Yemen, where 40 children were killed and many more injured.

Can you imagine being the first medic on the scene of a bombing that has destroyed a bus? The chaos. The noise. The smell of burning. The smoke and fumes. The bodies everywhere.



And then discovering that it was a *school* bus, and most of the victims are young children? And then, as you push through the rubble to help pull out the bodies, you discover the most unimaginable horror - your own son dead among them. This is the nightmare that first responder Hussein Tayeb faced last week. Children are not a military target. Ever.

We are a global community here. These are our sons and daughters. And we have failed them.

We owe it to Hussein, to Sunita, and to the millions of girls, boys, women and men that are suffering in Yemen, Nepal and many other countries around the world to stop this.

We owe them more than our sympathy. We owe them our action.

Control Arms welcomes the actions of those governments who have stopped transfers to the Saudi-led Coalition. But there are governments, including ATT States Parties, who are still supplying weapons, and violating the ATT. An American bomb destroyed the school bus. And it could have just as easily been a British bomb.

We will keep campaigning to stop arms transfers to all warring parties in Yemen. And we will keep campaigning for the ATT to be effectively implemented. We call on you as governments to stop the transfer of all weapons that fuel senseless suffering.

I am proud that this year the President of the CSP is from my region. And it is poignant that the conference be held in Japan, a country where *hibakusha*, survivors of the nuclear bombings have spent decades campaigning for peace and to reduce human suffering. We salute their work.

In Asia, we have varied challenges facing our countries from armed violence and conflict, and the ATT can be of great benefit to our region. I welcome the newest States Party, Brazil, and I call on all States in Asia to also join the ATT.

With joining the Treaty comes the responsibility to implement it effectively.

Control Arms calls upon all states to:

- Make the ATT work. Live up to the treaty that bears your signature.



- Plug the leak. Too many weapons are diverted, and end up in the illicit trade. You can do more to stop this.
- Raise the bar on reporting. Commit to transparent, timely and accurate reporting to help reduce diversion and corruption.
- Join the Sprint to one hundred, and be part of the global community working to transform the arms trade.

You are diplomats and officials representing your countries. And you are parents, brothers, sisters, friends and community members. This is a Treaty of hope. You signed it because you believed in a better world, where guns and bombs are not freely sent to oppressors and abusers, and where people, not profit are the central consideration.

We know you can do more than debate procedure and process. We were with you when you negotiated a Treaty that could make a difference. Let us be with you now as you strive to make it work.

Remember Hussein and Sunita with every statement you make this week, and join with us to ensure this is the last time such horrors have to be described.

Thank you.