Fifth Annual Conference of States Parties to the ATT (CSP5)
Geneva, 26 August 2019

Daily Summary: Day 1 (Monday, 26 August 2019)

This year, Control Arms is calling on States Parties to increase their efforts toward the robust implementation and universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In particular, Control Arms demands that States Parties immediately cease all export authorizations that violate Articles 6 and 7, while fully incorporating an assessment of the risks of gender-based violence (GBV) in arms transfer decisions.

Before CSP5 began this morning, Control Arms campaigners from all around the world gathered at the Place des Nations in Geneva to raise awareness about the especially grave harms faced by those particularly vulnerable during conflict, such as children and victims of gender-based violence. Holding posters with slogans advocating for greater attention to gender-based violence, the ongoing conflict in Yemen, and the ATT’s goal of reducing human suffering, campaigners stood behind a statue of a child gazing upward as fighter jets fly by to raise awareness about the importance of the treaty’s robust implementation.

Opening Session
The Conference, chaired by CSP5 President Amb. Jānis KĀRKLIŅŠ of Latvia, began with high-level statements from several speakers, including UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, Namibia’s Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Christine Hoebes, ICRC Vice President Gilles Carbonnier, and Ms. Nounou Booto Meeti from the Control Arms delegation, among others.

In her remarks, Nounou Booti Meeti reminded CSP5 attendees of the real and human costs of the arms trade -- and of the pivotal nature of effective regulation. She shared stories from her own experiences in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Once, she explained, “escaped death by a whisper” when a young man from a powerful rebel group threatened her with his gun--and she only survived by publicly humiliating herself. Another time, just one year later, she witnessed a young child soldier sentenced to death for killing a Red Cross agent: the child “needed a pen, pencil, and a school uniform” but “instead he was given a Kalashnikov, bullets, and a military uniform,” Nounou explained. These stories, she hoped, would not gain sympathy, but inspire action. She reminded CSP5 that we have a “life-saving treaty--the Arms Trade Treaty” at our disposal, and that the progress that has been made so far is “not enough--not for the millions of civilians who suffer due to violence perpetrated by weapons,” and “not for the thousands of people who still live in fear of gender-based violence,” and not “for the millions of children who continue to disproportionately bear the brunt of armed violence and warfare.” And she called on states to “rigorously adhere to legal obligations under the Treaty,” to “immediately cease arms transfers that fuel conflict, poverty, and violations of human rights and humanitarian law,” to “support transparency to help ensure accountability and prevent diversion,” and to “leverage the ATT to protect against gender-based violence” -- “for the benefit of all humanity.”
Gender and Gender-Based Violence
The theme of CSP5 is gender and gender-based violence (GBV), which has three areas of focus: meaningful and equitable gender representation in ATT delegations; the differential gendered impact of armed violence and conflict; and the incorporation of gender-based violence into the ATT’s export risk assessment. Former President of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga opened the gender and GBV session, focusing on the violence faced by women and girls in their homes and at the hands of their close relatives -- and on the increased likelihood of harm and death when a weapon is present. Ms. Vike-Freiberga also emphasized the importance of stemming illicit flows of weapons, which empower criminal groups, threaten law and order, and diminish the ability of governments to carry out their basic functions.

Ms. Christine Hoebes spoke again at this session, with a particular emphasis on the importance of women’s voices and inclusion, given the effects of violence on women. She noted that “women have for far too long been excluded from the arms control and disarmament debates, despite being disproportionately affected by weapons.”

The ICRC’s Gilles Carbonnier also gave a presentation, reiterating the findings of the ICRC’s April paper on international humanitarian law, gender-based violence, and the ATT’s risk assessment. He called on States Parties to act to reduce gender-based violence, noting that “sexual and gender-based violence remains a very grim reality today in armed conflict, but it remains preventable and it must be prevented.”

UNODA’s Izumi Nakamitsu similarly called on States Parties to better address gender--in their delegations, in their work, and in their implementation of the ATT: “The arms control and disarmament world has often been gender-blind,” she noted, “and it’s important that we start changing that in a serious way,” because “It is important for human rights, and it is a prerequisite for durable peace, security, and development.”

Representing civil society on the Gender and GBV Panel, Annie Matundu Mbambi of WILPF DRC talked about how weapons are “constantly used as a symbol of power and authority,” undermining gender equality, human security, justice, and human rights. She also highlighted way in which civil society can contribute to efforts to effectively implement the GBV criteria as well as to a better understanding of the gendered impact of armed violence, through research, collection of gender disaggregated data.

Fifteen States Parties and several civil society organizations made statements during the gender and GBV session. Every single statement welcomed gender and GBV as CSP5’s thematic focus. Many states specifically called for the production and analysis of data on arms-related harms that is disaggregated by gender, to better understand and demonstrate the differential gendered impact of the arms trade. South Africa, Montenegro, and South Korea explicitly called for greater gender balance in ATT delegations, and several states endorsed the proposal to institute a gender criterion when selecting ATT sponsorship beneficiaries. New Zealand, the European Union, and the United Kingdom called for greater gender mainstreaming across the board. Austria was the only state to call for a greater focus on LGBTQI* inclusion at the ATT, echoed by WILPF and Control Arms.
**General Debate**
Finally, the day ended with the general debate, which opened the floor for statements on a wide array of issues (with the exception of gender, which had been covered in the previous session).

In the general debate, many states raised concerns around the adequacy of current funding levels and the importance that ATT States Parties meet their financial obligations under the Treaty. Both Germany and the Netherlands called for improved reporting by States Parties, with the Netherlands adding a particular emphasis on the importance of transparency and the public availability of those reports.

Several States Parties argued for the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty’s effective implementation to development: South Africa noted that unregulated arms sales can be an impediment to development, while the European Union and the Republic of Macedonia recognized that proper ATT implementation could positively affect the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Numerous States Parties raised concerns around particular countries’ and regions’ hesitation in joining and implementing the treaty. The European Union called out the United States, in particular, for its recent announcement that it will withdraw its signature from the Treaty, while Spain noted its own efforts to advocate for the Treaty’s univeralization with non-States Parties.

Peru, speaking on behalf of a group of States Parties from the Americas, emphasized the role of the ATT in reducing human suffering and called attention to the negative effect that arms has on the economic, political, and social situation in Venezuela.

**Side Events**
In addition to the conference sessions, there were also four side events on Monday.

The first, co-hosted by South Korea, the United Kingdom, Control Arms, and SIPRI, discussed pragmatic approaches to reducing the risks of diversion, focusing on total life-cycle system management (TLCSM) of conventional arms.

The second, cohosted by Control Arms, Australia, and the Netherlands, launched the ATT Monitor’s 2019 Annual Report. Verity Coyle and Katherine Young of the ATT Monitor discussed the research process and outcomes of this year’s report, while the Stimson Center’s Rachel Stohl provided an in-depth look at the report’s findings and the trends revealed over the past year in reporting and transparency.

The third side event, hosted by WILPF, presented national and local perspectives on preventing gender-based violence through arms control. This event heard perspectives from five women from WILPF national sections and partners from Colombia, Burkina Faso, DRC, Sri Lanka, and Yemen. The panelists also expressed their views on what gender diversity and gender perspective means in disarmament and arms control.
And finally, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime hosted a side event on the responsiveness of the ATT and the Firearms Protocol to existing and emerging threats relevant to preventing and combating diversion and illicit firearms trafficking.