

Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

1 September 2021

Geneva, Switzerland

Wednesday's plenary session began with the continuation of Tuesday's budget discussion.

The UK stated that the 12% budget increase is too significant, especially during the pandemic and disapproved of this budget increase. **The EU** reported financing projects to strengthen the treaty implementation, local expertise and institutional capacity. **The Republic of Korea** announced their contribution of 100K to the VTF and Sponsorship Fund this year. **The UK, [Japan](#), [the EU](#) and the Republic of Korea** called on all State Parties to meet their financial obligations promptly.

Agenda Item number 8: Transparency and Reporting obligations under the ATT

- A number of delegations underlined that transparency is a fundamental principle of the ATT.
- With the exceptions of France and South Africa, there was strong support for the revised national reporting templates. The changes were recognised as providing much-needed clarity and would make the templates more user-friendly. A number of states expressed their willingness to provide assistance on national reporting.
- China supported the new reporting templates and expressed its concerns that transparency needs to accommodate national security concerns.
- No states opposed the DIEF, and most encouraged other State Parties to engage in this forum.

The ATT Secretariat gave an overview of the status of reporting. The statistics showed that in total, only 77% of State Parties submitted their initial report, out of which 21% requested their reports to remain private. As for the annual reports on imports and exports, only 55% of State Parties in 2020 submitted their annual report, out of which 29% requested their reports to remain private. Compared with 2015, 84% of State Parties submitted their annual report that year, and only 4% of them were not made public. There is a clear decrease in annual reports by region.

The Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR), Mexico and Romania, presented the numerous challenges on reporting that were discussed during the Working Group's meetings. The COVID pandemic may have hindered State Parties' ability to submit reports, along with the lack of political commitment or structural problems, the challenge of declining reporting rates needs to be addressed. The [WGTR Report's](#) recommendations included support from the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund to assist State Parties to submit timely reports, encouraging the use of the information exchange platform to ensure that every State Party can express their views, and the use of assistance mechanisms for State Parties who have not yet submitted their reports. The WGTR made significant progress in reviewing the reporting templates and improving them to include more valuable and relevant information. These clearer and more user-friendly templates should allow more State Parties to participate in reporting and enhance the quality of reports. The High-levels of CSP7 and all stakeholders were called to consider and recommend the use of these revised templates.

Belgium gave a presentation on the [Diversion Information Exchange Forum](#) (DIEF). It was postponed to CSP8 to allow for broader in-person meetings. The DIEF is a new concept in the ATT framework, and clear terms of reference on the methods of the DIEF to make the most of this forum are needed. States may need more direction and reassurance on how to use the DIEF. Non-state experts were encouraged to work with States to encourage relevant information sharing in the DIEF to prevent diversion.

Mexico expressed its support for the new report templates. [Switzerland](#) encouraged State Parties to submit their reports and expressed its concerns about the downward trend in reporting. It promoted the use of the VTF for State Parties having difficulties with reporting. Switzerland welcomed the recommendations of the WGTR and supported the DIEF. **The EU** underlined that reporting is a cornerstone obligation of the ATT and encouraged timely and non-confidential reporting. It supported the changes proposed to the templates and volunteered to assist State Parties with their reports, referring to the ATT outreach program. **Romania** underlined the need to build national capacity in the area of national reporting and offered their assistance to help State Parties in their reporting obligations. [Japan](#) endorsed the new reporting templates and welcomed the EU support for the ATT national points of contact. [Belgium](#) expressed concern at the alarming situation concerning the declining number of annual reports. It reminded delegations that many tools are available to help with reporting and highlighted the importance of transparency in reporting. **China** encouraged reporting and transparency but expressed concern regarding the submission of information impacting national security. **South Africa** stated that their position on the reporting templates has not been considered and expressed their unease with the adoption of the new reporting templates due to their national security concerns. South Africa requested further discussion on the matter. **Peru** supported the updated templates. **France** had no comments on the revised reporting templates as their use is only voluntary. **Nigeria** supported interagency reporting mechanisms to increase transparency and expressed its own need for a national training manual workshop. **Ireland** expressed support for the revised reporting templates, which were much more user-friendly, and its willingness to assist States Parties with their reporting obligations. **The Republic of Korea** supported the new reporting templates. **Chile** expressed its willingness to collaborate with State Parties that wish to fulfil their obligations and face challenges. Chile referred to its working group with Peru and Columbia on a training program on diversion.

[Control Arms](#) expressed concern that the decline in compliance and increase in private reporting undermines transparency and the ATT's effectiveness. It supported the amendments to the reporting templates, the collection of data and encouraged all State Parties to engage in the DIEF. [ASER](#) underlined the importance of transparency, stressing that transparency in annual reports is the only way for civil society to contribute to states' efforts in advancing their obligations. [MAAT for Peace](#) spoke on the situation in Afghanistan. **Argentina** stated that transparency and the exchange of information are essential for building confidence between states. Reporting can enable challenges on implementation to be identified. **Guatemala** announced the creation of their inter-institutional group of experts to create its annual report. **Australia** welcomed the DIEF.

Agenda item number 4: thematic discussion on SLAW and stockpile management

The discussion under Agenda Item 4 was resumed. [UNODA](#) called for synergies between the Firearms Protocol and the ATT to better monitor arms transfers worldwide. [WILPF](#) invited ATT working groups and sub-working groups to harness synergies, called for an update of State Parties initial reports and stressed the importance of public reporting and sharing of information. [Control Arms](#) voiced their support for synergies and ammunition to be expanded within the context of the ATT. [MAAT for Peace](#) emphasised the importance of more robust control of SALW and ammunition in areas of conflict. **ASER** stated that many governments act against the obligations set out in Articles 6 and 11 by exporting arms into regions where war crimes are being committed. **Cameroon** underlined the importance of responsible stockpile management, marking and stamping procedures.

All states, civil society and organizations voiced their support for synergies within the ATT and encouraged public reporting.

Agenda item number 9: status of ATT finances and matters pertaining to financial contributions

The Secretariat reported on the ATT's finances. The Financial Rules require states to pay the invoices within three months and then the status of contributions will be published on the ATT website. Currently, only 88% of the total required payments have been received. There is a deficit of US\$489,446. States were reminded that the non-payment of financial contributions has implications for the ATT. The mandate of the Management Committee to prepare guidelines for financial arrangements was extended in order to revise the draft. No state should be prejudiced by Rule 8 (1) d of the ATT financial rules. On the revised draft guidelines for invoking Rule 8(1)(d), the Management Committee has worked with all States Parties to build together a solid and efficient process. The proposal contained a single or multi-year payment plan, a payment calendar and a maximum six-year period for the payment plan. In the case of non-compliance, the State Party will be requested to explain the reasons and return to compliance within 60 days.

Germany stated that any State Party could be in arrears for various reasons, and the proposed process has to indicate a possible way to settle the concerned state's financial obligations. It proposed to look at established UN mechanisms. **The Republic of Korea** noted that it would be essential to lay out a concrete process on the financial arrangements. [Switzerland](#) expressed its approval for the new process and its support for the 2022 budget. It is concerned that more than 50 states have not made the necessary payment even though financial participation to the ATT is legally binding. **China** highlighted the importance of adequate financial resources for the proper implementation of the ATT and specified that developing countries should be prioritised when dispersing funds. **Mexico** expressed their concerns about the cash flow situation and agreed with the proposed process. **The EU** stressed the importance of compliance with the financial obligations for the effective functioning of the Treaty. It fully supported the Management Committee's proposal. [Belgium](#) also expressed their concerns about the financial situation.

The Management Committee's proposal for invoking Rule 8(1)(d) was approved.

Side Events

Taking stock of the EU ATT Outreach Programme

Organizers: European Union

Mr. Eran Nagan, the Chair of the EU Working Group on Conventional Arms Export, opened the event by noting that predictability and transparency are keys to better arms controls. He stressed that the ATT Outreach Project, an initiative undertaken by the EU in partnership with BAFA and Expertise France, has been instrumental in implementing the Treaty outside the EU. The project provides assistance to states seeking to take measures to implement the ATT including by adopting end-user certificates, developing guidelines and legislation in support of the implementation of the ATT, or developing databases for licensing officials. Mr. Werner Knapp of BAFA provided an overview of activities implemented in the last twelve months. Stressing that no project exists in a bubble, he noted that there is a need to further coordinate and cooperate with other projects and donors, including the ATT Secretariat and civil society to build on synergies and avoid duplication. He also highlighted the need for a long-term perspective on outreach support, including by ensuring that partner countries have the tools they need to independently implement the ATT and national strategic trade controls. Lastly, he stressed the importance of developing a phase-out strategy that would allow long-term partner countries who reached a certain degree of autonomy to take forth the work independently, ensure that they are kept up to date with the latest developments in the area of ATT and arms trade controls, and remain active as mentors and role models for other countries working on ATT implementation.

Benjamin Hautecouverture, Senior Research Fellow at the Fondation Pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS) spoke about how the EU ATT Outreach Programme was adapted to address the challenges posed by the COVID19 pandemic. He outlined initiatives to foster dialogue with partner countries and the expert community, as well as a new series of cross-cutting webinars. He concluded by noting that remote solutions have added real value to outreach activities and can help open access and expand tools for the outreach.

The role of effective stockpile management in preventing illicit trade and diversion: lessons from Sierra Leone

Organizers: Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

This event, organized by the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) discussed Sierra Leone's experiences with stockpile management to prevent illicit arms trade and diversion and how it can inform these efforts in other contexts. Ambassador Dr. Lansana Gberie opened the event by stressing the importance of cooperation and assistance in stockpile management practices, an issue that was highlighted in his Working Paper titled "*Strengthening efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and ensure*". He emphasised that cooperation and assistance must go beyond capacity building and include robust measures built on the sharing of information among states. He also stressed the importance of including civil society and states not yet party to the ATT in order to explore effective ways to address the issue of arms diversion.

Emilie Mbaye, MAG's Regional Programme Manager in West Africa, discussed key takeaways from MAG's work on arms and ammunition management in Sierra Leone. In partnership with the Sierra Leone National Commission on Small Arms (SLeNCSA), MAG has supported Sierra Leone to develop a National Strategic Plan on Weapons and Ammunition Management which sets out objectives for the

period up to 2023. Noting that capacity is one of the biggest challenges to developing strong arms transfer control, MAG approach to this challenge is the development of a needs analysis as a way of mapping out priorities. She encouraged donors to show flexibility during the implementation of projects, in case concepts or objectives change.

Philips Alpers of the Centre for Armed Violence Reduction spoke about the role of digital arms tracking. He talked about Arms Tracker, a digital tool which seeks to assist states with recordkeeping of arms and ammunition in West Africa, a project supported by the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) and the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund. He stressed that the Arms Tracker enables officials to follow arms and ammunition through every stage of their use and allows governments to remain in compliance with ATT and other regional and international arms control mechanisms. Next, Albrecht von Wittke, Head of Division for Conventional Arms Control in the Federal Foreign Office of Germany explained the rollout of Arms Tracker in Sierra Leone. Noting that Sierra Leone's experience demonstrates that the challenges posed by poor stockpile management practices go beyond national security, posing significant translational challenges, he stressed the importance of regional exchanges of best practices and lessons learned.

Speaking on behalf of civil society, Adenike Cole, the Coordinator of Sierra Leone Action Network on Small Arms discussed the intersection of gender with the diversion of SALW and presented recommendations centered around the inclusion of women, in line with UN Resolution 2025. She noted that despite Sierra Leone's Special Court recommendations to encourage the active participation and inclusion of women in government and particularly in decision-making processes for the prevention of conflict, the arms control field remains male dominated. When developing policies or measures to prevent arms diversion, Cole stressed the importance of including women not as victims but as stakeholders.

Dr. Adamu Mohammed Sani, Deputy Head of the Small Arms Division at the ECOWAS Directorate of Peace and Regional Security, spoke on the role of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials in strengthening stockpile security in the sub-region. He shared that ECOWAS member states have made significant strides, particularly focused on the construction of physical structures and efforts to promote physical safety of armouries. Dr. Sani stressed that regional efforts are instrumental in mobilising technical support and partnerships to strengthen national efforts on stockpile management and promote safe storage of arms and ammunition.

A recording of this side event can be found [here](#).