



**PARLIAMENTARY FORUM**  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

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**"Role of Parliamentary Assemblies in the promotion and implementation of the ATT"**

**Thomas More Institute**

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen. I would also like to thank the organisers for this opportunity. It is an honour for me and the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons to be here today.

Let me start by giving you a short introduction to the Forum and later focus on how we work with the Arms Trade Treaty.

The Parliamentary Forum on SALW is a unique global network of 200 parliamentarians from 70 countries in Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

The Forum attracts politicians from all political factions – left, right and centre.

It provides a space for parliamentarians to debate, join forces, and contribute to the advancement of the small arms and armed violence reduction agenda.

The Forum was founded in 2002 in the Spanish Congress. Since then the Forum has contributed to strengthening the legislative framework for SALW control, increase the understanding of SALW violence amongst parliamentarians and the development of best-practices on SALW violence reduction and prevention.

The Forum works by enabling parliamentarians to act at national, regional and international levels.

Provide parliamentarians and their staff with expertise, technical support, capacity development, as well as a platform for dialogue and exchange.

The Forum has contributed to decreasing the violence associated with the widespread availability of small arms through various projects and initiatives;

The Forum started to work for the Arms Trade Treaty in 2007 in order to increase parliamentary involvement in the work for a Treaty.

Parliamentarians have a lot to contribute to the process as the ATT is a political document.

The ATT is a major achievement and offers a tool to parliamentarians worldwide to improve international standards and praxis to cope with the negative effects of arms transfers.

It is in fact more far-reaching than most national legislations and regional frameworks, and will provide a very helpful tool for parliamentary oversight of arms transfer.

- **Dialogue between supply and demand countries**

Although the substantial part of the regional and capacity building work takes place in Africa, Middle East and Latin America, the role of Parliamentarians from Western countries is extremely important.

Forum members from developing countries in Latin America and Africa and the Middle East have for long time voiced a strong wish to have a dialogue with their colleagues in producing countries.

For example, one immediate consequence of the Arab Spring was an increased interest from parliamentarians in European countries to have a closer look on how to improve the parliamentary oversight of arms transfer.

We have an ongoing dialogue with the US Congress since 2008 which is gradually generating a larger interest and reaching higher levels. At our last session the ATT was discussed which would have been impossible a few years ago.

Linked to the ATT process, the Forum has initiated several seminars and discussions in European parliaments on the issue of the need for improved national arms export legislation and parliamentary oversight and more European harmonisation towards better standards.

- **South-south cooperation**

Members of the Forum come from diverse backgrounds and various political convictions, but all experience the problems caused by the wide availability of arms and their misuse.

While these problems might sometimes differ in relations to the national and regional contexts, parliamentarians can learn from measures implemented in other countries and share best practices.

The Forum has long experience of inter-regional cooperation between parliamentarians in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East and uses this platform to foster south-south cooperation where parliamentarians support each other.

Through our seminars and regional and inter-regional exchanges we can give support to parliamentarians and develop their capacity – to understand the Treaty and to give them the tools to work for its success.

The next step is to give support at national level. This is where we can achieve concrete goals.

When the Parliamentarians go back after attending international seminars and investigate the situation in their home parliament they can call on the Forum for more support.

For example, our members have written letters to government, put questions in parliament, organised events to rally support amongst colleagues to push for the Treaty.

One very good example is the work of our Board Member Hon. Drissa Sanogo, who later will tell us about his work in Burkina Faso as well as in the sub-region.

Lastly, I would like to stress the importance of cooperation with partners.

The Forum works with a wide network of experts for instance from governments including National Commissions on SALW, United Nations agencies (UNREC and UNLIREC), civil society (IANSA, Saferworld, Control Arms) and research institutes (Small Arms Survey). Just to mention a few.

We also work with other parliamentary organisations. IN 2014 there have been several initiatives and events related to the Treaty. This way, we avoid holding isolated seminars and can instead foster cooperation, share information, carry the message forward.

Unless there are any immediate questions, I will give the word to Member of Parliament from Burkina Faso and Board Member of the Forum - Hon. Drissa Sanogo.