



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

**Report of the General Secretary Peter Weiderud**

**July – December 2013**

**Meeting of the Board  
Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons  
Berlin, 30 November, 2013**

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**Introduction**

Honourable Members of the  
Board of the Parliamentary Forum on SALW

It has been eight months since our last Board meeting and I am very happy that you could agree to come together these days in Berlin.

Ideally we should have had our board meeting in September or October and we looked for three options to make that possible. One was to combine the Board meeting with a regional seminar for the Balkans in Belgrade. A second option was a follow up conference in the US Congress, combined with activities around the UN General Assembly, and the third was the focus on European arms transfer policies in Berlin.

Although there was strong interest for a seminar on the Balkan, our friends there preferred the timing to be in 2014. In the US, we faced the difficulties with the budget crisis and the closing down of most government offices at the time we needed to make our decisions.

Hence our focus went to Berlin and we are very happy for the support from Hon Katja Kuel and colleagues who welcomed us. However due to the uncertainty following the German elections in September and the ongoing negotiations on the formation of the Cabinet, we agreed to do the seminar at the end of November.

So although there are good and valid reasons for have the meeting today, it is too long period since our last meeting, and I hope we can agree this weekend to have our next meeting in the beginning of 2014, as we need to catch up some momentum.

## **Activities**

Hon Board

Since we last met in New York in March this year I sent you a shorter update in July as well as via the newsletter.

Just after we left New York the Arms Trade Treaty was adopted, making this important achievement a clear highlight of the year.

Since the inception of the Forum, but in particular over the last six years, members of the Forum have put pressure on their governments and raised awareness on the need to regulate the trade in arms. Together with Control Arms and other partners we are now working towards supporting our members to ensure the speedy signing, ratification and effective implementation of the Treaty. A major grant application has been submitted to support this work which I will tell you more about. While we have many dedicated members for the ATT, we may need your thoughts on how to best engage members in this task from countries where the interest appears to be somewhat lukewarm.

The Swedish MFA is the Forum's core donor. The Forums regional work and capacity developing work is usually financed by project funding from other donors. During 2013 the Forum has operated with only one donor, which means that activities have been modest compared to previous years. At the moment the Secretariat is down to one full-time program officer and the Secretary-General on quarter time equivalent. Nevertheless a number of activities have been held, funded by the Forum's core budget as well as in-kind contributions from partners. Time and effort has naturally been invested in fundraising; developing new project ideas and identifying and approaching donors, so that we can be stronger in 2014.

Yesterday's seminar on parliamentary oversight of arms exports forms part of a project we have developed with the Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). We heard about MP Katja Keul and her interest in the issue and after meeting with her we decided to join forces and hold a first meeting in Berlin bringing together some of the key people. We hope this to be the start of a longer project and we have applied for specific funding.

As mentioned in the newsletter, a workshop has been held at the Liberian Parliament in May together with MP Gabriel Smith and British NGO Action on Armed Violence (AOAV). A national chapter is emerging and will be supported by AOAV.

The German Federal Foreign Office organised a conference on Smart Technology in SALW Control where Vice President Christer Winbäck formed part of a panel. Discussions focused on potential of smart technology for controlling SALW, their security and development, including combating diversion, improving physical security and stockpile management, supporting export controls, and fighting terrorism and organized crime. I invite Mr Winbäck to tell us more about this.

The Forum was present at both IPU General Assemblies this year. In Quito in March, 30 new members have joined the Forum. The second assembly in Geneva in October had a strong disarmament focus. Together with Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), the Forum held a joint reception welcoming the Arms Trade Treaty. Board Member Betty Amongi spoke and gave an account on the dangers of SALW in Africa.

We held a presentation on the topic of Arms Transfers between Latin America and Europe at the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EUROLAT), held at the Lithuanian Parliament in July. The aim was to present the issue to and suggest it as a topic for future meetings. Senator Escudero, Argentina, made a follow up request to add the issue to the agenda. We were however sad to learn that Senator Escudero, former president of the Forum and very dedicated member did not get re-elected to the senate this autumn. However, the strong ties with the Argentine Senate as well as Eurolat are maintained through parliamentary staff and new member Senator María Higonet, who is a strong champion of the ATT.

Directly after our last board meeting we held a seminar in the US Congress where more than 30 participants attended the seminar, including 2 Members of Congress and 15 members of Congress staff as well as other actors. The intention was to follow up six months later, but due to the budget impasse in October the seminar could not happen. Giving them some time to re-organize, we will try again in 2014.

Finally regarding the Forum's presence at the UN first Committee, when the US Congress activity did not happen we made the decision to cancel plans to be present and hold a side event as the original idea was bringing a delegation to New York and Washington and thus saving costs and travel time. To have some presence, particularly as the disarmament week provides opportunities for networking and finding out the status of the ATT, Forum staff was present at plenaries, side events and some closed meetings and briefings on the ATT. The opportunity was also used to meet with Mayors Against Illegal Guns as well as speak to the UN regional centres about planned projects.

## **Funding**

Hon Board,

Since we last met, the secretariat has given high priority to fundraising for 2014 and beyond.

We are since one year in dialogue with the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding support for legislation work in Latin America. While the elections in Norway created a long wait we are finally meeting with them next week on December 5 to discuss funding for 2014. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is now an official partner for this project.

We are in dialogue with DfID regarding a larger proposal for activities in Africa and the Caribbean which we submitted via MP Mark Pritchard, UK. They suggest applying for funding through the Strengthening Alliances and Partnerships (SAP) programme of the conflict pool (a tri-departmental fund managed by DFID, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office). We hope to schedule a meeting in early December.

The Forum has discussed funding opportunities with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support the Forum's activities at the regional level including Africa, Latin America and the MENA region. While they regret that they cannot provide funding at this time for this particular project they are open to further discussions with us. The majority of USAID activities are funded by individual USAID country missions. This means that if we are looking to conduct activities in a particular country, we can contact their Legislative Strengthening Advisor, who can help put us in contact with USAID staff in countries where USAID funds legislative strengthening activities to explore opportunities to collaborate and/or provide funding or in-kind support.

An email was sent out to all members asking them to explore specific needs in your country to address issues of armed violence. However, the response to this call was rather limited.

A project specifically aimed at supporting our female members, focusing on gender based violence as well as the broader security agenda was also sent to another department within USAID. They got back to us in October and asked us to resubmit for 2014 as funds for 2013 had already been allocated.

Yesterday's seminar on *European Parliamentary Network for Oversight and Scrutiny of Arms Transfers* is a start to a continuing project where we can engage European parliamentarians in oversight and scrutiny of arms exports. The project proposal we submitted to Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust in September is still under review. The project has already generated interest from parliamentarians, civil society, research institutes as well as the European External Action Service.

The Swedish agency Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) has provided project funding for the Forum for a number of years but sadly they rejected this year's proposal for work in the Balkans with the motivation that projects with greater focus on grassroots level work are prioritized. The project will be resubmitted in spring with a focus on creating spaces for dialogue between civil society and parliamentarians. In addition the project proposal is being discussed with our long term UNDP partner SEESAC.

We have re-established contact with the UN regional centres for disarmament for Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean – UNREC and UNLIREC.

Both centres act as partners in a larger project proposal we submitted to UNSCAR in November. UNSCAR is the UN multi-donor funding mechanism created to support the preparation for ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, including through South-South cooperation. Two weeks ago we received the news that our concept note had passed the first round and we were invited to submit the full proposal. This was prepared and submitted last week and we will have an answer in the middle of December.

With UNREC we also form part of a larger project they have developed for the Sahel region and where the Forum constitutes the parliamentary component of the project.

For activities especially in the MENA region President Ala Talabani, Iraq, is talking to her parliament regarding funding for activities focusing on SALW related issues in the MENA region. The Finnish MFA also has an interest in MENA.

In addition to this a number of smaller grants have been applied for including;

A smaller grant from FBA's fund for projects in Sweden was applied for this autumn to support activities in the Swedish parliament.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Cluster Munition Coalition for work on their respective conventions.

An East Africa project submitted to Peace Projects grant program launched by The Journalists and Writers Foundation.

The project submitted to the UN Democracy Fund with a focus on strengthening democratic processes, which I mentioned in my last report, was not accepted.

In addition to these already submitted proposals there are upcoming opportunities with the Finnish MFA which will have an INGO call for proposal open early 2014. They are open to discuss our MENA projects.

## **New partners and members**

Hon Board

During the autumn we have also worked on strengthening partnerships with old and new partners.

With the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) we are discussing a work in the MENA region.

A meeting was held with the European External Action Service in Brussels. EAS is interested in finding ways of engaging European parliamentarians in the work on SALW and the Forum is a natural partner. It was noted that it has been difficult to involve MEPs or even European MPs in SALW related work. Some potential topics could be conflict tracing, new technology/smart technology as this could be of interest for European parliamentarians. Stockpile management is a less politicized topic which can be a good start. While in Brussels a meeting was held with MEP Jill Evans, UK as well as Belgian national MPs.

The Open Society Initiative West Africa (OSIWA) and the Forum are exploring areas of collaboration. While they so far have not done much work on SALW they are looking at drug policy reform and drug trafficking which is tightly tied with the illicit arms trade in the region.

As the Forum has long experience in engaging parliamentarians it can assist OSIWA in the areas such as; creating a platform for legislators and civil society and increase and improve the relationship between these actors as well as strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians and so forth. This combined with OSIWA's experience of working with civil society and knowledge of the region appears to be a good match.

As mentioned earlier that after a few years of inactivity we are working with PGA again and we are maintaining and strengthening our strategic relation with IPU.

Regarding new disarmament topics, the issue of fully autonomous weapons is increasingly discussed. The Campaign to 'Stop Killer Robots' was launched in April with a series of events to brief activists, media, and parliamentarians to call for a ban on the development of these weapons.

Also new on the agenda is the new/smart technology I mentioned earlier. I believe it could be worth for the Forum to explore these issues further.

Hon Board

I invite the members of the board to share their ideas as well as report on their activities since we last met. The Secretariat has already received reports from Christer Winbäck on a debate on "Strategic Export Controls in 2012 - Military Equipment and Dual-Use" in the Swedish Parliament as well as a series of seminars on the ATT which I look forward to hearing about.

Board Member Drissa Sanogo has been active with his national network of MPs and has also presented a proposal for further work in the ECOWAS region.

We congratulate Board Member Daisy Tourné on the law on illicit firearms that she has worked with for many years which was approved in Uruguay this year. She will tell us more about this in a moment.

In addition to her work at IPU on SALW, Betty Amongi is working with World Council of Churches on ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty in Uganda.

I am pleased that we this morning eventually had a chance to speak to our colleagues in the Balkans including president of the Security and Defence Committee of the Bosnian parliament Dusanka Majkic. We have also been in close contact with Board Member Konstantin Samofalov on the work in the Balkans.

With this I look forward to your comments and reflections.