



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Report from Secretary General Peter Weiderud to the meeting of the Board of the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Lights Weapons, meeting in Geneva Monday, October 13, 2014

Honourable Members of the Board,

Since we last met in Belgrade in March earlier this year for the Board meeting and the Regional meeting for the Western Balkans we have hired a new staff member and program officer. I am very happy to welcome and introduce Fausto Brindis to you. Fausto is from Mexico has a master of Public Policy from Willy Brant University in Germany specialising in conflict studies and management and has working experience from the parliament in his home country. This is his first day in office and we welcome him both to our work and to Stockholm.

The administrative focus of the secretariat the last few months has been related to a significant change in the core funding of the Forum. After having been in cooperation with the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs for 2012 and 2013, the Swedish government decided that we should move back to Sida for our core funding.

The advantaged of going back to Sida is that we can work with a longer horizon in our planning. With the Foreign Ministry we could only agree on one year contract of cooperation, which meant that we had to report the first year before we could apply for the second. This left us with uncertainty for a couple of months every year.

So, even if we appreciated that the Foreign Office well understood the political work and significance of the Forum, we are happy now to be able to work we two years contracts.

It took us some months to negotiate the new contract with Sida and I was able to sign the two year contract with them in the beginning of July. This meant that we were running more than six months without core income and almost run into a cash flow problem. However, we were successful, got exactly the amount we applied for and is now secured until the end of 2015.

One condition in the Sida contract was to have an audit made on our internal processes, a process which took significant time for us in August and September. We have now received the draft audit report with recommendations to improve our internal control system. The recommendations, although some of them more relevant for a larger organisation, are helpful for

our administrative development. Most of them – like creating manual for office routines - will be my responsibility. Other, like deciding on policies to avoid fraud, will be the responsibility of the Board.

I will come back to these issues as soon as we have the final report. I share with you now the draft recommendations.

Activities

Our main achievement, since our last meeting, was the inter-regional conference held in Lomé, Togo at the end of May where we discussed ways to enhance ATT and UNPoA implementation by South-South parliamentary exchange and cooperation. Thanks to good cooperation with the UN Regional Centre for Disarmament, UNREC and the National Assembly of Togo, 30 MPs from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean participated and adopted a final declaration. I trust you have received the reports from both these meetings. A similar activity will be held in February in Lima, Peru and we will discuss details of this later today.

Together with Vice President Christer Winbäck and Board Member Daisy Tourné, we attended the Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Illicit SALW, held in New York 16 - 20 June 2014. Together with partners International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) , International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) the Forum organised two side events; "Improving the Health of the PoA" and "SALW and the Post 2015 Development Agenda".

Cooperation with IPPNW worked very well and following the successful seminar we have developed a project proposal on parliamentarians and health professionals collaborating to improve implementation of the UNPoA. This is currently being considered by UNSCAR.

During the week in New York we were happy to work with IANSA and assist IANSA to have a strong presence at the Bi-Annual meeting of States, after some time of crisis.

In New York we also had a discussion with the IANSA network on the possibility of restructuring IANSA. The Parliamentary Forum took an active role in the beginning of the year in supporting some of the involved NGO:s to create an interim structure and to receive Swedish funding for such a restructuring. As we could not verify the needed ownership for such an effort for the Swedish NGO:s who at that time were identified, we never implemented the idea. In the discussion in New York we emphasized the importance that some larger international organisations who have been involved with IANSA now look at the possibility to restructure the network.

After New York our delegation continued to Washington for our dialogue with the US Congress. We met with the staffer for Latin America of the Foreign Affairs Committee and decided that for our next visit we should hold a joint seminar, possibly on border issues, in order to bring conversations and discussions up to the next level. We are looking at a seminar in March 2015

once the new Congress has settled in. We also met with Congressman David Price, Democrat from North Carolina.

In June Christer Winbäck represented the Forum at the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development Regional Review Conference for Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The Geneva Declaration is a diplomatic initiative supported by 112 countries that adhere to the goal of reducing armed violence in a measurable way by 2015 and beyond.

In July we had a seminar together with the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) in Panama City. The afternoon session was dedicated to promoting the ratification of the ATT in Latin America and the Caribbean. The seminar was chaired by our Board Member Daisy Tourné who is also Secretary of the Commissions of Parlatino. An overwhelming 50 parliamentarians from the regions attended this event and we extend our deepest thanks to Daisy for her great efforts in making this happen. The vast majority became members of the Parliamentary Forum, showing a strong dedication to the issue of disarmament and arms control within Parlatino.

The Fifth Meeting of State Parties for the Convention on Cluster Munitions was held Costa Rica in September. The Forum sent out a memo to all members encouraging them to investigate possibilities of being included in the national delegations. The response was somewhat bleak but 12 members responded asking for letters to support their inclusion of which three materialised. In the end Zimbabwe, which is not a state party, did not send a delegation at all and in the case of Liberia, the appointed member could not travel due to the Ebola situation. However we are pleased that MP Paul Tumasang from Cameroon did attend and we look forward to hearing from him at the General Assembly. It is clear that more needs to be done to re-engage parliamentarians in the issue of CCM so choosing it as a topic for our IPU side-event seems like a wise choice.

Members

All in all, together with new members from Lomé and Belgrade, since the beginning of the year 50 parliamentarians have joined the Forum which represents a 27 % increase in our membership.

A few of our members have also left their seats in parliament, including our Vice President Christer Winbäck and our board members Carmen Muñoz and Konstantin Samofalov. This a reality in politics, but nevertheless sad for the Forum. We have not heard from Carmen if she has taken up a new role but we do know that Konstantin was just appointed for Spokesperson of the New democratic party of former Serbian president Boris Tadic.

We also congratulate our former president and long term member Benito Lara who was recently appointed Minister of Security and Defence in El Salvador.

Arms Trade Treaty

50 countries have now ratified the ATT which means that entry-into-force will happen 90 days later i.e. Christmas Eve this year. Many Forum members are working hard to push their respective

countries to sign and ratify. Much thanks to the UNSCAR grant, the Forum is able to offer support to members for activities aimed at promoting signing and ratification of the Treaty.

Since the Lomé conference there has been very positive developments where our members have taken the following individual actions; MPs from Benin, Burkina Faso, Chile, DRC, Liberia, Malawi, Peru, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe have requested support to hold national activities and briefings. Planning is underway. MPs from Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe have tabled questions in parliament and also requested assistance in drafting letters to the Prime Minister. Our member from Jamaica mobilised his parliament to host the next SIDS activity.

Of these activities, two have already materialised. Hon. Drissa Sanogo held a seminar on the ATT on 1 October which we look forward to hearing more about. Next week we are holding another seminar in Benin together with our local WAANSA partner. The activity for the Defence and Security Committee of the Parliament of Malawi has been scheduled for November.

The activities in Liberia and Zimbabwe have been postponed due to the Ebola outbreak and political disagreement respectively.

The lunch scheduled to take place in Pretoria on 10 of August for MPs attending the Pan African Parliament PAP session, was also postponed due to the outbreak of Ebola where our member and host of the meeting, Dr Lahai could not travel due to the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone.

Funding

In terms of funding the Forum is currently in a strong position thanks to our 2 year core funding from Sida as well as the grant from UNSCAR which aside from resources for activities also allowed us to add another member to our secretariat. Since we last met we have received another grant from the Folke Bernadotte Academy of 350'000 SEK (USD 50'000) for work in the MENA region. We are planning to organize our next regional MENA meeting back to back with the General Assembly in Amman. Tomorrow we will also use the grant given by CMC for work on the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Also worth mentioning is that we recently had news from the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs that the Sahel conference planned for this autumn has been postponed until 2015 and that we should continue talks as we draw closer.

DFID are still interested in our project proposal for Africa and the Caribbean but have suggested applying for a new fund which will be launched later this year.

Unfortunately we did not receive the grant applied for with UNWomen have we gotten no further with the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding support for legislation work in Latin America.

We have submitted a couple of new project proposals to UNSCAR and FBA as well as prepared concept notes to UNDP similar to the one rejected by UNWomen.

Other

The Forum has also contributed to a number of written publications and inquiries.

We were invited by the Small Arms Survey to contribute to their Yearbook with a paper on the issue of parliamentary oversight and information on national small arms exports provided to parliament. The Yearbook will be published in beginning of next year.

We have also answered to an inquiry from the International Development Committee of the UK Parliament related to strengthening Parliament's in developing countries and whether DFID should give a higher priority to Parliamentary strengthening and so forth. We are happy to share this paper with you if you are interested.

Since we got back from the summer holidays much work has gone into planning for our upcoming activities this autumn and beginning of 2015 which we will also go through in details later on.