



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM  
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

**Report from Secretary General Peter Weiderud to the General Assembly of  
the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Lights Weapons, meeting in  
Amman, Jordan, November 13-14, 2014**

Honourable Members of the Parliamentary Forum

Dear Friends,

The General Assembly of the Parliamentary Forum is a unique meeting point for Parliamentarians concerned with proliferations of small arms and the prevention of armed conflicts.

This network of dedicated Parliamentarians is exceptional. Each one of you have solid experience from your constituencies and parliaments on what violence means, but also how to bring about political change.

By sharing this with others and learning from colleagues and the institutional wisdom of the network itself, we can all stretch and improve our individual political agendas. But even more important, by forming the common voice of Parliamentarians world-wide, this network is able to make a political difference.

Moderator,

Let me again express our deepest thanks to the House of Representatives in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the generous offer to us to host this assembly, in connection with the regional meeting for the MENA Region.

It has been two years since our last assembly at the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm.

I am very pleased to report that it has been two very active years and the Forum has grown geographically, in numbers and attracted a many new and dedicated members and I am very pleased to welcome some of you to your first Assembly.

We are also in a better financial position compared to two years ago. As you know, 2012 was a very difficult year, in which both our core funders decided to withdraw. However the **Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs** stepped in and saved the Forum, from a very difficult situation and the risk of liquidation.

In 2014 we were moved back to **Sida** giving us the stability of two year contracts again. I should add that both Sida and the Swedish MFA have always provided the amounts we have asked for, at present around USD 300.000. The problem we faced was more related to shifting policies within the donor communities.

The Forum is a small actor in terms of funding, and for the donor community big is beautiful at the moment, as fewer partners give less administrative attention for donors. There is also a need in the donor community for development funding to work more both with the connection of small arms and development and political processes.

The dialogue created with Sida and the Swedish MFA, as a result of the risk that the Forum would fall between chairs, has given as a chance to discuss these principle issues and has made the Forum stronger.

In the case of Spain, our second previous core funder, the change was a direct consequence of the financial crisis. However, as the Spanish economy we look forward to come back to also this part of our cooperation. The cooperation on the political issues has been in place the whole time.

In 2013, inspired by the wakeup call in the change of funding, we made serious efforts and dedicated substantial resources to developing new projects and identifying new donors. These are efforts that have paid off.

The Forum has secured two important grants for 2014-2015; one from the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (**UNSCAR**), which is the UN multi-donor funding mechanism created to support the preparation for ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

This grant is of \$US 182,150 for a project of 18 months titled: *“Enhance ATT and UNPoA Implementation by South-South Parliamentary Exchange and Cooperation”*. The UN regional centres for disarmament for Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean – (UNREC and UNLIREC) are our main partners.

We also received a grant of 50'000 USD from the **Folke Bernadotte Academy**, for work in the MENA region, which has financed the regional part of this gathering.

In addition to this we have received numerous **in-kind contributions from various parliaments**, including Burkina Faso, Germany, Greece, Jordan, Lithuania, Liberia, Serbia, Togo, United Kingdom, USA as well as the Latin American Parliament and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

We also have a number of project proposals currently being reviewed by the British Government (DfID), the German Government, the Norwegian Government as well as UNDP and the Folke Bernadotte Academy.

Following your wisdom as expressed in Stockholm that it is important that Spain, one of our main donors, forms part for the Board, I visited Madrid in for a very fruitful meeting with **Hon. Augustin Conde, President of the Defence Committee**. He was most willing to accept your request to be on the Board of the Forum. By that the board could fulfil the request from the GA in Stockholm to ensure a Spanish representative.

We were also very pleased to identify and invite our civil society representative for the Board. Mr **Roy Isbister** is **Saferworld's** team leader on arms transfers. He has worked in this area for nearly ten years, and has considerable experience in developing and implementing strategies to promote the adoption of responsible arms transfer control strategies at national, regional and international levels. He has been an invaluable resource to our work on the Arms Trade Treaty on numerous occasions and we look forward to his session tomorrow.

I am also very happy to welcome and introduce our new staff member **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.

Since we met in Stockholm, a major achievement in the area of disarmament has happened – the adoption of the **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.

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 ATT.

As we know, when the arms trade is unregulated, weapons easily find their way into the wrong hands. 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 transfer.

Such a change of practice will have a major impact in arms producing countries who are not working within, more far reaching, national or regional rules or codes of conduct. According to the ATT, the state parties are prohibited to export items which could be used in genocide, crime against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions from 1949 or attacks directed against civilians. However, state parties, when issuing licenses, are also obliged to assess the potential that the export of arms will:

- Contribute to or undermine peace and security
- Facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law or human rights law
- Facilitate an offence related to terrorism or transnational organized crime
- Mitigate risk in relation to confidence building measures
- Facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or violence against women and children

This 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.

The 2001 **United Nations a Programme of Action** to Combat, Prevent and Eradicate the Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA) was established to tackle the issue of the illicit trade. The ATT and the UNPoA are hence complimentary and mutually reinforcing.

Thanks to the UNSCAR grant the Forum has strong resources to work with its members on this issue. We held a large inter-regional conference on at the **National Assembly of Togo** and in cooperation with UNREC in May this year and we will follow up with a similar activity in April next year, this time in **Lima, Peru**.

We are also directing efforts to giving support to **national interventions** and follow up, working closely with legislators towards ratification and implementation of the ATT and UNPoA, providing legal advice and advice on best practices for oversight of implementation. So far cooperation has been initiated with Burkina Faso, Chile, DRC, Liberia, Malawi, Peru, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe and I invite our members to share their experiences during the next session and tomorrow when we examine the status of the ATT.

We are also giving a special focus on exchanges between **Portuguese speaking** countries in the regions to overcome past challenges where African Portuguese speaking states often express a sense of exclusion at regional exchanges, due to poor translation etc.

In February, together with the **Parliament of Jamaica** we are holding a regional conference for **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** which has been identified as a priority as these nations will face different challenges. Their territorial waters can easily be used for illicit shipments and they thus become violators of the treaty unwillingly. Activities will assist them in developing proper legislation and developing partnerships with more equipped countries.

In terms of **other policy and thematic orientation of the Forum** over the past two years, in addition to the ATT and UNPOA, we have explored the areas of **bladed weapons** and **explosive weapons** and we will learn more about these issues later today and tomorrow. Our partners Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), Article 36 and the International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) have been providing expertise in these processes.

Another pressing topic has been Transparency in the State and the Secrecy Related to Weapons. The Forum is making more efforts to hold dialogues between producing countries as well as **dialogues between producing and recipient counties**.

Our dialogue with the **US Congress** is growing stronger. While the provenances of illicit weapons found in Latin America are diverse, an important proportion emanates from illicit transfers across the US border to Mexico. The long-term objective of this dialogue is the reaching of an agreement on, and introduction of, legal measures to eliminate these illicit transfers. In spring 2013 we held a seminar with more than 30 participants, including 2 Members of Congress and 15 members of Congress staff as well as other actors.

On this occasion we worked together with the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). The intention was to follow up six months later, but due to the budget impasse in October the seminar could not happen 2014 has been difficult too for follow up given the elections. However meetings have been held with the Foreign Affairs committee looking at a seminar after the 2014 Congressional Elections.

Together with our member Katja Keul for the **German Bundestag** we held a seminar in Berlin 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 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (**SIPRI**) has been a vital partner in this and the **European External Action Service** has agreed to cooperate with us and our hope is to hold the second activity in spring 2015.

With the German Government we have also explored the issue of **Smart Technology in SALW Control**. Our Vice President Christer Winbäck formed part of a panel at a conference organised by the German Federal Foreign Office and Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC). Following this Mr Winbäck also contributed to a publication on the topic. 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. We are also in dialogue with the German Government for renewed funding opportunities in 2015.

We have also revived our work in the **Western Balkans** and reconnected with our partners **SEESAC**. However, we have noted that it is difficult to find project funding for political work in the region. Most disarmament grants are for surplus destruction and other technical measures to rid the region of weapons. Reportedly there is a lack of interests amongst politicians. Nevertheless, in March this year, thanks to a generous offer from the Parliament of Serbia and SEESAC we held a seminar and have attracted new engaged members. We are pleased to see representatives from Albania and Serbia here today and we hope to continue this fruitful cooperation.

We have also strengthened our cooperation with the **UK parliament**. The UK is often presented as a positive example in this field. It is the only European country with a dedicated parliamentary body to monitor arms export. The UK Parliament has formed a committee of committees – the Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC), involving the concerns of all related standing committees - Defence, Foreign Affairs, Development and Trade – in a more comprehensive process to evaluate the licences in a more critical approach. Lord Desmond Browne has been a much valuable resource to the Forum in terms of providing expertise and guidance.

The Forum has also contributed to some other publications including the **Small Arms Survey Yearbook 2015** with a paper on the issue of parliamentary oversight and information on national small arms exports provided to parliament.

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.

The Forum is also working closely with **other parliamentary networks**. The good cooperation with the **Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU** continues and the Forum has been active and present at several IPU General Assemblies. The second assembly in Geneva in October 2013 had a strong disarmament focus. Together with **Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)**, the Forum held a joint activity welcoming the Arms Trade Treaty. We also had an excellent cooperation with the **British Group of the IPU** for their annual conference last week which this year was dedicated to the ATT. Several of our members attend and we would like to hear your reports.

At the October IPU Assembly we held a side event on the topic of the **Convention on Cluster Munitions** together with the **Cluster Munition Coalition, CMC**. Forum members also participated in the Fifth Meeting of State Parties for the Convention on Cluster Munitions was held Costa Rica in September and we look forward to their reports. The international critique against cluster munitions is related to the great risks involved for civilians. 98 % of all victims of cluster munitions are civilians.

Cooperation with the **Latin American Parliament, Parlatino** continues. A seminar to follow up on the Model Legislation developed by Parlatino and the Forum in 2008 was held in Panama this summer. It is our hope that the **Norwegian government** will provide resources to for a project developed with our legal expert in Argentina and the **UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, focusing on legislative support in Latin America connected to the Model Law.

The Forum has also been invited to work with the **Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EUROLAT)** which has asked for the Forums expertise on Arms Transfers between Latin America and Europe.

In terms of the **UN process** the Forum continues to have a presence at the **UN first Committee** meetings and the **5<sup>th</sup> UN Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action on Illicit SALW** held in in New York in June this year. 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"*.

I would like to take this opportunity t thank all of our members for their hard work over the past two years. In addition to the cooperation with the parliaments and partners I mentioned earlier we would like to extend our sincere thanks to our partners from civil society, research and academics.

The Forum has grown and matured since we last met. It will continue to grow and mature. It has a responsibility to show that politics and political processes can make a change for the reality of people.

I am very happy to have been part of this dynamic cooperation for the last seven years.

On behalf of the Secretariat I thank you for your dedication and Your attention.