



Side event

”Reducing threats to international security: Mobilising parliamentarians from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Middle East to strengthen global parliamentary action for enhanced universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty”

Ninth Conference of States Parties (CSP9) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

24 August, 2023

Geneva, Switzerland

Executive summary

The side event took place within the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons’ (PFSALW’s) project “*Reducing threats to international security: Mobilising parliamentarians from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Middle East to strengthen global parliamentary action for enhanced universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty*”, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada. The project activities included a regional seminar in Asia in collaboration with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) on June 9-10 2022, and a regional seminar in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in collaboration with the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO) on June 30- July 1 2023. In the seminars, regional Parliamentary Action Plans (PAPs) were adopted for the first time in each region focusing on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) linking to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. The conclusions from the regional seminars in Asia and LAC, along with the key recommendations for parliamentary actions from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), were presented at PFSALW’s side event on August 24 at the side lines of the Ninth Conference of States Parties (CSP9) to the ATT. The side event highlighted parliamentary perspectives and recommendations on actions for the implementation and universalisation of the ATT, linking to WPS. The side event was co-hosted with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and included the active participation of parliamentarians, international organisations, Government representatives and civil society organisations (CSOs). Approximately 30 persons attended the side event.

Ms. Karin Olofsson, Secretary General of PFSALW, opened the side event by expressing her sincere gratitude to all present for the shared commitment to prevent illicit flows of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada for the financial support to PFSALW allowing for the realisation of the side event. She further thanked the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden for co-hosting the event. She also underlined the importance of the side event as to provide input to, and underpin the impact of, the CSP9, given the vital role of parliamentarians in taking action for the



universalisation and implementation of the ATT, linking to WPS, as to reduce human suffering.

Mr. Niklas Nilsson, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations in Geneva provided the opening remarks in the side event. He took the opportunity to underscore that addressing armed violence is needed as to build sustainable peace. Furthermore, armed violence is not only limited to conflicts as it is also prevalent in non-conflict settings, often as part of organised crime. In this area, parliamentarians can contribute to change by putting pressure at the national level for measures to prevent armed violence. He noted that many parliamentarians are already actively engaged for change, including the parliamentarians in the panel of the side event. Preventing armed violence is a learning process, calling for various stakeholders to work together and share experiences and recommendations, thereby ensuring ATT universalisation and implementation.

Hon. Sahar Qawasmi, Member of Parliament in Palestine, and Board member of PFSALW noted that uncontrolled SALW, their illicit acquisition and transfer is a recurring security dilemma around the world, including in MENA. As the world's least peaceful region according to Global Peace Index, MENA is facing various struggles, internal political instability, poverty, gender discriminatory practices and increasing social and economic instability. In terms of ATT compliance, the region is lagging behind with only Lebanon having ratified the ATT and Palestine having accessed it, out of 20 States in the region. Hence, parliamentary action regarding legislation, oversight and awareness raising is key, including applying a gender and youth perspective in legislation relevant to SALW control, ensuring sufficient funding for effective implementation of the ATT, and the promotion of cross-party collaboration to raise awareness and champion relevant instruments.

Hon. Elias Hankach, Member of Parliament in Lebanon, and Member of PFSALW accounted for the situation in Lebanon. With approximately 2 million SALW in circulation and 31% of the population owning a gun, the risk of armed violence is high. Moreover, the war in Syria is having serious effects on Lebanon, including through the influx of illicit SALW. Hence, the commitment and actions on behalf of parliamentarians are vital to promote peace in the country. While Lebanon has ratified the ATT, implementation is lagging behind. Hon. Hankach reconfirmed his commitment to taking action, and encouraged fellow parliamentarians to do the same with regards to ensuring the harmonisation of national legislation with the ATT, promoting reporting on the ATT as well as raising awareness among fellow parliamentarians and the constituents on the importance of preventing armed violence.



Hon. Julia Lorena Fries Monléon, Member of Parliament in Chile, and Member of PFSALW highlighted that LAC is the region with the highest levels of violence in the world. Central and South America, with rates of homicides of 25.9 and 24.2 per 100.000 inhabitants each, were the subregions with the highest average of homicides rates in 2017. More than a half of the violent deaths are the result of the use of guns. The serious situation underlines the need for effective measures to counter the use of SALW, including advancing ATT universalisation and implementation across the region. Hon. Monléon specifically emphasised the promotion of women's active participation in national and international processes on the ATT as key, and noted that the adoption of a feminist foreign policy is one way of swiftly ensuring shifting priorities towards gender mainstreaming. She further recommended parliamentarians to promote the systematic and disaggregated collection, including by gender, of national data on firearm-related deaths and injuries, to help inform policy on the prevention of armed violence, as well as to raise awareness within the educational area about the negative effects of the use of SALW.

Ms. Bianca Pabtoy, Gender and Disarmament Associate, Center for Peace Education (CPE), Miriam College, the Philippines observed that countries in Southeast Asia find themselves in different phases of conflict and peace, with some nations currently experiencing armed conflict, negotiating peace agreements and/or undergoing post-conflict reconstruction. At a community level, gun ownership and use continue to be widespread, making firearms a common household object. She further noted that civilian possession and use of firearms have resulted in frequent and lethal violence against women. Despite the serious situation, few States in the region have advanced towards ATT universalisation or implementation of the WPS Agenda. Hence, there is still a need to clarify misconceptions and showcase the added value of the ATT as a tool that can regulate the arms that enable the continued armed violence that is present in the region. Moreover, decision-making on security matters also remains very male dominated, underlining the need for increasing the participation of women in such processes.

Ms. Ida Scarpino, Regional Project Coordinator, United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) shared key insights from the efforts of UNRCPD in strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians in Asia-Pacific to integrate gender-relevant considerations into their security-related policies and legislations with the objective to make SALW control initiatives more effective. She noted that key challenges in the region include that arms transfer control is still not perceived as a major priority among the variety of security threats that are of concern to Governments as well as the lack of harmonised national legislation that aligns with the provisions of the ATT. Hence, based on the experiences of UNRCPD, she recommended parliamentarians to prioritise advocating for harmonised national legislation aligned with the ATT, as well as to collaborate with Governments and international organisations to



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raise awareness on funding opportunities for initiatives relevant to the ATT, such as from the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF), and advocate for the establishment of national coordination mechanisms.

In the **open floor session**, the topic of increased collaboration between civil society and parliamentarians was highlighted, as to identify ways to draw on synergy effects between various efforts for SALW-control. Moreover, the question on what type of data and statistics is lacking was raised, with regards to the data that parliamentarians would like to access to enhance policies. It was concluded that among other, increased data regarding gender and armed violence is an area where additional research can be made.