Remarks presented to the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

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Your Excellency Mr. Jose Antonio Meade Kuribreña, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico,

Your Excellency Mr. Roberto Angulo, Governor of the State of Quintana Roo,

Your Excellency Mr. Oscar Árias, Former President of Costa Rica

Mr Alex Galvés from the Transition Foundation of Guatemala

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Buenos Días,

Allow me first to thank the Government of Mexico for its unwavering support to the Arms Trade Treaty and for hosting the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, “CSP1”. I also wish to commend Ambassador Lomónaco on his skilful leadership of this conference’s preparatory process.

In the words of the Secretary-General: “the Arms Trade Treaty offers the promise of a more peaceful world”. The ATT closes a glaring moral gap in international law.

When the United Nations was requested to assist the negotiations leading to the adoption of the ATT, we embraced the task with alacrity. We were motivated by the notion that this Treaty will, as the Secretary-General said, open a “new chapter in our collective efforts to bring responsibility, accountability, and transparency to the global arms trade.”

I commend States, civil society and all the organizations whose hard work has made it possible for us to convene here today.

CSP1 is historic because it marks the beginning of a new chapter in the life of this landmark Treaty. The Conference is tasked with making decisions that will have fundamental implications for the effectiveness of the Treaty for many years to come.

I am confident that the States Parties will rise to the occasion and make those important decisions, guided by the best interests of Humanity.
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, in his role as depository of the ATT, I am pleased to confirm that 130 States have signed the Treaty, and [seventy-two] States have formally informed us of their consent to be bound by the ATT.

Of these, sixty-nine States are already States Parties, in accordance with Article 22 of the Treaty.

The other [three] States that have expressed their consent to be bound by the Treaty will become States Parties on October 21st, 22nd, and 27th, respectively.

This is all welcome news. The pace of ratifications, which resulted in the speedy entry into force of the Treaty, is truly encouraging.

However, when we consider that, out of the 156 States that voted in favour of the adoption of the Treaty, 26 did not sign the Treaty and less than half are presently bound by it, we know that there is still a long way to go.

The outlook becomes more telling when looking at a regional breakdown by juxtaposing the numbers of those States that 1) have supported the adoption of the Treaty, 2) signed the Treaty and 3) expressed consent to be bound by the ATT.

From the Western European and Others Group, 30 States supported adoption, 27 States signed and 22 States have expressed consent to be bound. So, around 70% of the support translated into a legally binding commitment.

27 States from the Latin American and Caribbean Group supported adoption, 28 States signed and 20 have agreed to be bound. So, again, around 70% of those supporting are bound.

From the Eastern European Group, 20 States supported, 19 States signed and 16 States have expressed consent to be bound. So, this is the group with the highest percentage, around 80%, of support translating into consent to be bound. So far, so good.

But now the ratio starts falling dramatically:
46 African Group members supported, 37 signed, and only 12 States have agreed to be bound. Thus, only 25% of the support translated into consent to be bound.

And finally, 33 States from the Asia-Pacific Group supported the adoption, 19 signed, but only 2 States have agreed to be bound, So, only 6% of the support was actually translated into consent to be bound.

The low level of ratification of States from the Asia and Pacific Group, my region, and the African Group needs particular attention.

I urge States Parties from all regional groups to work with their peers in their region, in particular those States that supported the ATT but are not yet bound by it, to encourage them – and help them – to expedite their ratification or accession processes.

The ATT can only fulfil its full potential when it has the broadest participation by States, including the major arms exporters and importers.

As the Depositary, the Secretary-General will spare no effort in promoting universal participation in the ATT. However, this is also a task that requires all States Parties’ efforts.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

States Parties have made clear their preferences regarding the ATT’s practical support arrangements, including the establishment of a Secretariat.

We, at the UN Secretariat, fully respect the prerogatives and wishes of the States Parties. We have no intention to interfere with the decisions to be taken by States Parties.

The UN Secretariat will not undertake any activities without a clear mandate to do so.

For our part, we will ensure that there is no overlap between our work mandated by the General Assembly on small arms and light weapons, and that of the future ATT Secretariat, and that work will not be duplicated.

It is crucial that our activities complement each other, rather than compete with each other.
At the request of States Parties and aspiring States Parties and with the support of voluntary contributions and the agreement of donor countries, we have, to date, undertaken activities to help with ratifications and with capacity-building for the Treaty’s implementation.

In this context, we wish to thank all the countries that have contributed to the Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, called “UNSCAR”.

Those contributions have enabled UNSCAR to fund several projects around the world this year.

We will continue to do so, in close coordination with the future ATT Secretariat.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that full implementation of the Treaty provides States Parties with the opportunity to exercise better controls over exports of arms and ammunition, and to improve their capacity to prevent and combat the diversion of conventional arms.

Ultimately, full implementation of the Treaty will enhance States’ contribution to global efforts to reduce armed conflict and violence.

Next month world leaders will come together in New York in record numbers in the UN 70 years of history. They are expected to agree on a global development agenda for the next fifteen years: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I am delighted that the draft for the 2030 agenda includes a target of significantly reducing illicit trafficking in arms.

The inclusion, for the first time, by Member States of disarmament as a part of the international community’s core development agenda is significant.

This reflects the conviction of the international community that without arms control and regulation, development would remain much harder to attain.
The recognition of the important link between disarmament and development, and peace and security, is important not only for the implementation of the ATT, but for all our efforts in countering the illicit and unregulated arms trade that brings so much misery to the people of the world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to close by reiterating our desire for close coordination and our readiness to assist States Parties and the future ATT Secretariat however we can, at your request.

I believe there is a strong connection between the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs’ mandate on small arms and light weapons and the quest for a universal ATT.

I assure you, States Parties to the ATT, that the UN and the Office for Disarmament Affairs is at your, and the future ATT Secretariat’s, disposal.

I wish you all a very successful and fruitful Conference.

Thank you. Muchas gracias.