



## **Civil Society's Contribution to the ATT Process in Wider Europe**

Presentation by Bernardo Mariani, Arms Transfer Controls Adviser, Saferworld, at a regional seminar on Promoting Discussion on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), Vienna, Austria, 11 February 2010

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank UNIDIR and the EU Council Secretariat for giving me the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience on *Civil Society's Contribution to the ATT Process in Wider Europe*. Furthermore, I would like to congratulate the Austrian authorities for successfully hosting this meeting and providing such wonderful facilities. NGOs are grateful to the Austrian Government for the funding it made available, which has enabled a large number of NGOs from around the world to come to Vienna this week and discuss their future roles and contributions to the UN ATT process.

The participation of civil society has been, and will remain, a crucial factor in the development of a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Although the ultimate decision and responsibility for adopting such a treaty lies with national governments, the efforts of civil society, at both the national and international level, have been instrumental in promoting the urgency of agreeing an ATT and the key features needed to make the future treaty comprehensive and effective.

As is the case around the world, support for an ATT is widespread and growing amongst European civil society. The Arms Trade Treaty Steering Committee (ATTSC), which includes several European civil society members, has guided NGO campaigning and advocacy on treaty content – most notably by drafting and promoting the *Global Principles* at the core of a meaningful treaty. European NGOs and other civil society groups have been active participants in the *Control Arms Campaign* introduced in 2003, which has engaged large sectors of civil society across Europe and worldwide in grassroots action, including the *Million Faces* petition for an ATT in 2006 and the *People's Consultations*<sup>1</sup> of 2007.

### **Public awareness-raising and campaigning**

Every year activists around the world use the *Global Week of Action against Gun Violence* to raise awareness, campaign for better arms control legislation and push for stronger regulation of the global arms trade. During the last Global Week of Action, in June 2009, there were more than 300 events held in over 90 countries, with organisations and individuals voicing not only their commitment to stopping gun violence in their own countries, but also voicing their demand for a global ATT as part of the solution. European campaigning organisations joined these efforts in many countries, including Belarus, France, Kosovo, Macedonia, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. There were numerous and diverse activities. They

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<sup>1</sup> Thousands of citizens in more than 50 countries around the world were asked for their views on what the ATT should include.

included workshops, press conferences, media interviews, letter writing to governments, rock concerts, rallies, school visits and even ATT T-shirt design competitions. In Sweden, to take but one example, the halls of the parliament were the venue for campaigning activity by the Swedish Action Network on Small Arms (SANSA) and the Parliamentary Association against the Uncontrolled Spread of Small Arms. Over 200 folders were distributed and information was displayed to encourage parliamentary involvement in the UN ATT process.

Since 2007, the Control Arms Campaign (Amnesty International, IANSA and Oxfam) and other organizations around the world have collected over 2,000 signatures from parliamentarians in 124 countries, demonstrating the extent of worldwide support for the adoption of an ATT. In October 2008 a *Parliamentary Declaration in support of an Arms Trade Treaty* was presented to the Chair of the UN General Assembly's Disarmament and International Security Committee. The Declaration, which was also signed by parliamentarians from 32 European countries<sup>2</sup>, is a reminder that members of parliament are not only supportive of an ATT but are also critically observing the progress that governments are making.

### **Advocacy**

There have been significant advocacy and lobbying efforts at the national, sub-regional, regional and international level involving European civil society organisations and individuals.

Within the European Union, civil society representatives regularly interact, through meetings, correspondence, telephone and email communications with key government officials to deliver civil society's policy messages and to urge for the negotiation of a strong treaty. There is on-going and fruitful dialogue on current and future prospects of the UN ATT process with EU government representatives in their capital cities, as well as in New York and Geneva.

It is important to highlight that policy dialogue and advocacy efforts have emerged in other parts of Europe too.

In Russia, the Center for Policy Studies (PIR Center) in Moscow and Saferworld have promoted stronger international arms transfer controls. At a regional policy seminar that was held in Moscow in March 2008 and brought together government experts from Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, discussions focussed on effective national, regional and international arms transfer controls with a particular focus on preventing diversion. A follow up regional seminar will take place from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the Kazakh chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In Ukraine, we have worked with a local NGO partner, the International Centre for Policy Studies, to encourage the development of a stronger, more transparent and accountable arms transfer controls system in line with international obligations and

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<sup>2</sup> Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and Ukraine.

international best practice. Together, we have also supported Ukrainian civil society and parliamentarians' participation in overseeing Government arms transfer control policy and practice.

In South Eastern Europe, an increasingly able civil society is actively engaged in dealing with various aspects of the proliferation of armaments, and has begun to develop its capacity for policy input and advocacy, through National Arms Control Working Groups, e.g. in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia, that have facilitated information exchange, lobbying and advocacy nationally and throughout the sub-region.

Civil society representatives from all over the world, many of whom are often relatively under-resourced, have tirelessly participated at each step of the ATT process within the UN.

For example, during the July 2009 session of the ATT Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) at the UN in New York, members of the ATTSC, including European and Southern NGO representatives, met with diplomats and state officials to advocate the vital components of an ATT. NGOs also supplied information materials for OEWG delegates and organized side events to explore key ATT treaty features. More than 40 NGO representatives, amongst them several from Europe, participated in a major lobbying effort at the UN First Committee in New York in October 2009 to influence the drafting of, and support for, the ATT resolution, which was overwhelmingly approved on 30 October 2009. In addition to regular discussions with diplomats in the UN corridors and at ad-hoc meetings, the NGOs distributed policy papers, hosted side events on different ATT topics, and mounted a display on breaches of the ATT global principles as a means of clearly communicating their position.

### **Policy research**

In recent months NGO activity on the ATT has focused on the move towards treaty negotiations, the next phase in the UN process. NGO arms control experts from Europe and around the world have worked together on the production of position papers on the range of equipment to which an ATT should apply, as well as how the ATT will actually work in practice and what mechanisms will be needed to make it effective. By producing these documents, and by allowing the more contentious aspects of the treaty to be explored and discussed by experts prior to official negotiations, we hope to have positively contributed to a more informed debate on the treaty within the UN system and to have bolstered the prospects of a successful conclusion to the process.

### **Next steps**

An important strand of work for civil society in the run up to the ATT conference in 2012 will be to maintain the global momentum necessary to secure a robust ATT. European civil society will continue to call for more urgency from states to advance the UN ATT process quickly and ensure a strong Treaty based on key rules that fully reflect states' existing obligations under national and international law. These rules are meant to help prevent those international transfers of conventional arms that are likely to be used for serious human rights violations, undermine sustainable

development, fuel conflict and crime, or risk being diverted into dangerous hands, such as those of terrorists. Moreover, in order to be meaningfully effective, an ATT must be truly comprehensive in scope and cover the broadest range of conventional arms as possible and the broadest definition of international transfers.

Although there is wide international support for the UN work towards an ATT, several states, in particular India, Pakistan, China, and Russia, remain sceptical, for various reasons, while other parts of the world, notably the Middle East, are not sufficiently engaged. In some of these countries, European civil society experts, in cooperation with local partners, can play an important role in raising awareness, creating support and contributing to a change of opinion amongst key actors. Indeed it is important to recognise that, through utilising global partnerships and networks, civil society has the capacity to act outside of the restraint of borders. There are already efforts being made in this direction. For example, in China Saferworld and local partners are trying to build more awareness of, and support for, the UN ATT process amongst think tanks and academic institutions by providing the environment in which wider stakeholders can exercise leverage to influence support for an ATT.

As I hope these few examples have made clear, Europe's civil society plays a crucial role today, working to promote the development of an ATT not only at the national and regional levels, but at a global level too.

Thank you.