

Mr AIDE GANASI – Thank you, Mr Speaker for recognising the people of South Fly.

Mr Speaker, my question does not relate to South Fly, it relates to PNG as a whole.

Mr Speaker, the United Nations General Assembly, in response to a growing global concern over the last two decades with respect to the terrible human consequence resulting from poor and inadequate regulation of the International Arms Trade, on 2 April 2013, adopted the Arms Trade Treaty.

The ATT opened for signatures on 3 June, 2013 and entered into force on 24 December, 2014.

At the time when the idea of the ATT was being proposed, a number of our Papua New Guinea Parliamentarians, including the current Prime Minister Honourable Peter O'Neill, Attorney-General Honourable Ano Pala, Communications Minister Jimmy Miringoro, NCD Governor Honourable Powes Parkop and others joined more than 2000 Parliamentarians across the globe in signing a declaration in 2012 pledging support for the implementation and ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty in their respective countries.

I recently attended a Regional Pacific Islands Parliamentary Workshop in Tonga where I learnt that to date 130 countries worldwide have signed the Treaty and 67 have formally ratified it.

In the Pacific Islands region, Australia, New Zealand, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have signed the treaty. Samoa is the only other Pacific Island nation which has ratified the ATT along with Australia and New Zealand.

Mr Speaker, I felt quite embarrassed to learn that Papua New Guinea is actually lagging behind many of our smaller Pacific island states in terms of ratifying the ATT when we, as the big brother of the Pacific should be leading the way in the pursuit of such important international commitment.

My question is: Could the Minister inform this Parliament where we stand as a country in terms of honouring our commitment to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty?

Mr RIMBINK PATO – Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the Member for South Fly for his very important question.

Papua New Guinea shares the concerns of the international community in relation to proliferation of arms trade and political uprising engineered by Arms Trade in terrorism, illegal arms smuggling, genocides, ethnic cleansing as well as dictatorship.

Papua New Guinea has not signed the Arms Trade Treaty for a number of reasons, not because it was against it, but in the overall context we need to look at what the implications are, in relation to the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty.

In fact, what Papua New Guinea has done to United Nations is to support the process whereby for instance; in 2001 PNG signed the global program of action in relation to this particular issue: the International Arms Trade and associated agendas which are of concern to the global community.

We have to consider very carefully what the Arms Trade Treaty has in terms of implications for our country. Last year we delivered the Defence Force White Paper as well as the review of the National Security Policy. These are matters which requires to be placed in the context of what implications the Arm Treaty has for the overall national security of our country. That is why, whilst we are supporting the United Nations, we are also sending our officers to undertake studies, attend all the conferences related to this particular international issue so that once we come to the position of executing this important document we will know where exactly our nation stands in terms of our own security policy and defence force.

As I was saying the other day in relation to another question, we have to act in this matters particularly in the international community when it comes to matters of security, in a sensitive and responsible way, particularly when the smaller nations in the Pacific Islands are looking to PNG for leadership. Therefore, we do not want to take a position by rushing to sign a document because it may be the agenda of countries other than our own. We are going to sign it, I assure the Member, it will be ratified by the Parliament through the normal process but a review is underway and our technical people are looking at it very carefully in the best of our national interest. Thank Mr Speaker.