

Hon'ble Chairperson, Hon'ble Members of the parliaments, Excellences' Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Very good morning to everybody.

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to convey, the august gathering here in this hall, very warm greetings on behalf of our delegation leader Hon'ble Mr. Iqbalur Rahim MP. and on behalf of the members of Bangladesh delegation. ~~I am indeed honored to speak on my country's behalf.~~

Dear colleagues,

As you know Bangladesh is basically a peace loving country. But unfortunately since we achieved the independence in 1971 the forces of darkness and anti-progress started working to undo our path of peace and progress. They started looting, vandalizing and setting fire in police stations, grain godowns and killing the freedom fighters including member of the parliament. Being unsuccessful in their efforts to destabilize the country they plotted to kill, and were successful in killing the then President of Bangladesh, the Founding Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and subsequently over- threw his regime. Then the nation waged a long struggle of democracy under the leadership of our present Prime Minister Hon'ble Sheikh Hasina and after 21 years, Awami League the party under whose leadership the country earned independence, again came to power.

As we are always against use of arms, even for settlement of dispute, including that of political nature. This is what that led to the settlement of an arms uprising in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area of Bangladesh. For this far reaching political settlement of the issue, our leader Hon'ble Sheikh Hasina the then Prime Minister and also the present Prime Minister was awarded Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize in 1998 by UNESCO.

After tenure was over, she handed over power to the care taker govt and unfortunately we lost the election by the count of seats, not by the count of votes. There after the ruling party which gained the state power through machination let loose a reign of terror upon the democratic and peace loving people. They even try to kill the leader of democracy Sheikh Hasina on 21 August, 2004 by attacking at the rally organized by our party Awami League. The severe grenade attack killed 22 of our leaders including a very high profile leader of our women movement.

Also in 2004 the nation witnessed a huge arms and ammunitions recovered from ten trucks at a sea port jetty. But unfortunately the then Govt. of Mrs. Khaleda Zia did not take any proper action against the culprits. After the present government got into power through a ballot revolution, the perpetrators of those cowardly acts have been brought into iustice.

Handwritten notes on the left margin:
A. Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, condemn us deeply from our heart and we the people of Bangladesh share concern of the world, of these terrorism acts in the name of Islam religion itself. We oppose terrorism.

But the defeated forces that had taken part in the genocide of our intellectuals, freedom fighters and innocent civilians in 1971 are still working tirelessly to unsettle the secular and democratic and progressive peace loving people of Bangladesh. Here I like to quote from a statement made by our foreign Minister Mr. A H M Ali at Dhaka on 17 June, 2015 at a workshop on "Capacity Building for the UN programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the Arms Trade Treaty. "It is in this backdrop that we need to remain vigilant about the illicit transfer and proliferation of small arms, light weapons and related ammunition inside and through our territory. We must ensure that Bangladesh is not used as a possible conduit or sanctuary for the billion dollar international trade in illicit arms and ammunition with the growing involvement of non-state actors". That we are in line to our commitment is evident from the fact that our country was the first country in south Asia to sign the ATT.

Bangladesh traditionally takes a lead in disarmament and arms control issues at the regional and international levels. Bangladesh is a pioneer in South Asia on disarmament, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty (APMB). It is in this spirit that Bangladesh had always remained actively involved with the ATT negotiations and pushed for arriving at a far-reaching, robust yet negotiated text for the Treaty.

As our Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said at the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly: "I am happy to be first in the region to be signing the Arms Trade and acceding to the remaining CCW (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons) instruments in this year's Treaty Signing Event. Our role in world affairs is based on justice and democratic values, which assures international peace and security, and support disarmament."

Bangladesh remains committed to international disarmament and non-proliferation in line with its Constitutional obligation and foreign policy pursuits. As a lead contributor to UN Peacekeeping Operations, Bangladesh would ensure compliance with ATT provision while contributing to maintaining peace in conflict and post-conflict contexts internationally. This year in the middle of the year PGA met at Dhaka, which was a very good gathering with fruitful results.

But, we did not ratify the treaty because of some hindrances we face and these hindrances to be addressed before ratification:

- (a) One of the main 'criticisms' against ATT is that it gives disproportionate authority/discretion to the arms exporting countries to make their own risk assessment vis-à-vis the importing countries. Bangladesh being an importing country should take a cautious approach in undertaking the ATT obligations and

to assess regional progress of implementation of ATT.

closely monitor how the traditional arms exporting countries in the West invoke the Treaty provisions vis-à-vis other importing countries.

- (b) It is to be noted that Bangladesh's main arms exporting countries like China and Russian Federation have so far distanced themselves from ATT, including voting against the Treaty during its adoption and refraining from signing/ ratifying it
- (c) Finally, Bangladesh's binding commitment to the ATT provisions could be invoked by certain vested quarters both locally and internationally to create undue pressure or impediments to Bangladesh's efforts to strengthen its national security apparatus through procurement of arms, ammunitions and equipment.

In view of the above, Bangladesh is considering the following as interim measures concerning ATT:

- (i) Remain engaged with CSP1 and its preparatory process as an observer, and also participate in regional advocacy events in order to keep apprised of the compliance situation with other countries in the region;
- (ii) Closely monitor the position of Bangladesh's traditional arms exporting countries like China, Russian Federation and others that have so far distanced themselves from the ATT process;
- (iii) Ensure dissemination of the ATT and Bangladesh's obligations as a signatory among the relevant authorities, including the National Parliament, security, law enforcement and border management agencies as well as immigration, customs and intelligence authorities; and,
- (iv) Most importantly, remain engaged with the UN, EU and other interested development partners to organize seminars/workshops involving all local stakeholders to identify the gaps in Bangladesh's existing legal, regulatory and institutional regime towards ensuring effective compliance with the ATT provisions.

Despite our move in the right direction, we do witness the growing use of small arms in criminal activities. Revolvers, pistols and rifles are used by the criminals very frequently. However, arms recovered by different law-enforcing agencies also include submachine guns, assault rifles, light assault rifles and light machine guns. ~~Last year a huge number of small arms and light weapons had been recovered in the small hill area and jungle of Habigonj, a district in the north-eastern region of Bangladesh, in the very close proximity to eastern Indian states known as seven sisters. Concerned authority thinks that these arms and weapons were cashed to be used by armed insurgents of eastern India.~~

We are working hard to reduce the trend before it assumes further threatening proportions. As a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty we are looking for necessary investments in developing an enabling legal regime and acquiring state of the art arms making and tracing technologies to enable us to consider eventual accession to the instrument.

Again I want to quote from our F.M's statement made at the workshop mentioned before. I would like to tell this august gathering that our delegation is fully agreed with the statement made by him. "This would be particularly relevant in view of our Hon'ble Prime Minister's recent announcement to further strengthen our local capacity to manufacture arms and ammunition considered essential for our national security. We believe that our legitimate aspirations to expand and diversify our defense capabilities should be matched by our readiness to assume enhanced responsibilities in conformity with the relevant international norms and standards. The investments we make in our national security interest are also likely to prove useful in the regional and international contexts, as evident from our lead contribution to UN peacekeeping operations."

In view of these factors, I hope that this two-day Workshop would help us move closer to achieving three main objectives:

One. To refresh our knowledge base about the obligations we have under the UN Programme of Action as well as the Arms Trade Treaty;

Two. To identify the gaps we may have in our existing legal and regulatory regime, and also the technology divide that limits our capacity to fully comply with our international obligations compared to other advanced settings;

Three. To appreciate the international cooperation mechanisms that may be leveraged to meaningfully address any gaps and weak links that we may identify through this process.

To conclude, I wish to thank PGA for giving us the opportunity to ventilate our points of views at this gathering, I would invite my colleagues in the parliaments of various countries to make the best use of this event to find answers to growing terrorist activities by intolerant ones through and the world using illicitly managing arms, and help chart a way forward to do our part in the global fight against the scourge of arms and weapons.

We look forward to work together in quelling the global terrorism with the support of the UN and other partners in the days to come. *We hope to ratify the treaty as at the earliest opportunity. We will do our best to this end.*

I thank you once again.

Dear colleagues,

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.

I'm really happy to note that El-sarkhouloukian Legislative assembly did a great job in organising this forum. I thank from heart.