

**SPEECH BY HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT OF
TANZANIA DR. TULIA ACKSON**

Hon. Minister,

Hon. Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania,

Hon. Pekka Hukka, Ambassador of Finland to Tanzania,

**Hon. Alvaro Rodriguez, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in
Tanzania**

Your Excellencies,

Fellow Parliamentarians,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honor for me to deliver, on behalf of the Parliament of Tanzania, a keynote speech at this very important forum, the Parliamentarians for Global Action. I would like to first congratulate the Organising Committee for the excellent arrangements for this seminar, I trust that all of you, particularly the participants from outside Tanzania, are enjoying your stay in Tanzania. I also would like to thank the Embassy of Finland in Tanzania for supporting the organization of this Regional Meeting. I also recognize the great efforts of the leadership of Parliamentarians for Global Action who have worked very hard to prepare for this seminar, including identification of the theme for this Meeting, "Addressing the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and Mitigation of Armed Violence." Thank you for a job well done. I am also aware that many of you have travelled long distances to Dar es Salaam,

having given deserving importance to this Meeting and the attendant theme. Thank you for creating time out of your busy schedules for this.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

“Addressing the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and Mitigation of Armed Violence” as a theme for this Meeting couldn’t have come at an opportune moment like now as we continue to grapple with political, economic and developmental challenges which in some parts of Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere in the world have lead to misuse of small arms and light weapons, thereby calling for an informed and coordinated way to deal with these diverse challenges. This meeting is one of its kind, having been organized to look into addressing the root causes of armed conflicts and armed violence in the world, dealing with illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is evident that Illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons have had disastrous and devastating human and humanitarian catastrophes in the world, though some parts are disproportionately more affected than others, the same way some countries are more affected than others. This has been, and continues to be, a cause for greater concerns.

The continuance of this vice has been caused, at one level, by the **inadequate regulation of nefarious trade** thereby fueling conflict and civil war in so many of our countries, resulting in the death, serious life-long injury and rape of hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens. The impact is far reaching, affecting not only the victims of Small Arms and Light Weapons, but also members of their families at a rate of at least 5-10 others in the family of these individuals is also negatively impacted.

And as if that level of human misery and suffering was not enough, **the inability to stem the flow of these instruments** of death has so many other terrible consequences, terrorism ranks high on the list.

In a world where terrorism and terrorists continue to wreak havoc and untold despair, the urgency of addressing the security implications of so many countries awash with weapons that these individuals and organizations can so easily get their hands cannot be overstated.

And what of the development aspect of all of this?

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

We all understand that conflict, armed violence, civil war – they all have profoundly negative effects on desperately needed steps we all need to take, individually and collectively, to improve the basic lives of all those we represent.

Conflict, war, armed violence – they all perpetuate a status quo which prevent delivery of proper healthcare and education standards for our families and children. And, as we all understand, education is an essential tool to lift any and every country out of poverty, for stability of any nation.

Our friends in the development cooperation community need to see adequate enforcement of the rule of law and sufficient security on the ground in order for them to commit ever more scarce development aid.

I therefore urge all of you, in the course of the discussions you will have today and tomorrow, to understand very clearly that addressing this scourge is not ‘just’ about preserving human life, preventing grave injuries, widespread rape, human misery and terrible suffering. It is – equally – an anti-poverty imperative of a most urgent nature. Although successful curb of illicit trade will not eradicate poverty overnight, the two aspects are closely related. Elimination of poverty, being the greatest challenge of our time, needs to be properly dealt with. Evidently, taking guns out of the

equation will greatly contribute to an environment allowing for other anti-poverty measures to be pursued.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As representatives of people, we have to act now. One may ask, what can we, as Parliamentarians - do?

I have been informed that tomorrow you will discuss and adopt a Plan of Action which will provide a blue print of sorts to move forward with some easy-to-implement, non-time consuming, but essential steps or initiatives.

I would hope that some of the following considerations may find their way to be reflected in this document.

Addressing the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons must take place at all levels for it to be successful at any one level, thus, national, regional and international level. A holistic approach - addressing simultaneously the same challenges nationally, regionally and internationally - is the only way to succeed.

Firstly, at the national level, go home and take a fresh long look at your domestic firearms legislation – addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is as a national problem. Make sure it reflects the challenges you face today, not 20, 30 or 50 years ago when it was first adopted.

Here in Tanzania we undertook such an exercise last year and now have an important new Firearms and Ammunition Control Act 2015. And recently, the Dar es salaam Regional Commissioner called upon all gun owners in Dar es salaam to surrender their weapons to the Police Force for verification. Our President Dr John Magufuli showed the way because he was the first person to present his guns to Police for verification. He also urged other owners of firearms across the country to also get their weapons verified. Therefore, this shows that our Government is committed to

address this problem and I encourage other countries to do the same. And now, the verification exercise is spreading to other regions, it is now a national initiative.

Other countries may have undertaken similar initiatives, they should be emulated elsewhere.

Secondly, at the regional level, in Africa alone, we have at least 4 legally binding regional agreements that impose obligations to African countries to address this illicit trade on Small Arms. These agreements include the *Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reducing of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa* (commonly known as the Nairobi Protocol), the *Economic Community of West African States Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other related Matters* (the ECOWAS Convention), the *Southern African Development Community Protocol on Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other related matters* (SADC Protocol), among others.

When you go home, you can approach Government Ministries and find out what they are doing to ensure compliance with these obligations.

You can also raise these matters directly in parliament and request relevant Government Ministries to come and brief relevant Parliamentary Committees in open session.

It is not enough to just ratify these Agreements – they have to be properly implemented and enforced.

At the international level, I would like to highlight 3 Instruments particularly those that you have in your folders:

Many of you are already aware of the Arms Trade Treaty.

After many years of intensive discussions and negotiations, this treaty was adopted in April 2013, opened for signature in June 2013 and entered into force in December 2014.

130 countries signed the ATT and, to date, 82 have ratified it already.

This is a significant accomplishment for a Treaty that was only adopted 3 years ago, exactly, today.

This Treaty was adopted specifically to address the Illicit Trade in arms and weapons – and not just small arms and light weapons – as well as to introduce the highest standards for international regulation of this trade.

For the first time in an international treaty, **it imposes obligations on States Parties that are exporting countries to take into account an array of considerations/factors and not to authorize exports of arms if they believe there is an overriding concern that serious human rights abuses might follow from any such export.**

Importantly it also draws the important link between access to such weapons and Gender Based Violence.

Many African countries played a substantial role in the negotiation of this Treaty.

Over 30 African countries signed the ATT within the prescribed period before it entered into force on 24th December, 2014 and 16 African countries have already ratified it.

Some of you have already played a decisive role in advocating publicly with your respective Government Ministries and within your Parliaments to sign and ratify one of the most important treaties of our generation.

I urge all of you who come from countries that have not yet ratified the ATT to move swiftly and decisively to encourage your respective governments to delay no further in taking this vital step.

Africa played such an instrumental role in making the ATT a reality.

We must continue to show real leadership.

Leading by example is the best way forward.

I wish also to draw your attention to the *UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons which was adopted in 2001.*

While this is not a legally binding document, it is an international agreement which has led to many countries sharing information on steps they have taken to address illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Under this Agreement, countries are required – every 2 years – to submit a short report to the United Nations on steps they are taking to address the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Please encourage your governments to take this important step.

As always, some have been better than others.

It is of particular importance this year as the 6th Biennial Meeting on the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons will take place at the UN in New York from 6-10 June, 2016.

Lastly, and perhaps a bit more technically, there is *the International Tracing Instrument* which – as it suggests – focuses on concrete steps to better trace the provenance of many weapons illegally held in our countries.

Again – kindly encourage your respective Governments to take these agreements seriously and comply with their reporting requirements.

As Parliamentarians, we must act now, not just uttering words.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope you will see your meeting here in Dar es Salaam as a beginning, of the continued fight against illicit trade on Small Arms and Light Weapons thereby fostering development, eliminating poverty, emancipating women from rape and gender based violence, and protecting life and humanity.

This marks the beginning of your new (for those new to devastation the illicit trade), or renewed (for veterans) commitment to eliminating a trade that has so devastated our lives, our countries and our civilization.

We owe this, not just to ourselves, but to our children, and future generations. For this noble cause, I wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you for listening.