

Parliamentarians from the region meet in Samoa

(PRESS SECRETARIAT); Legislators from across the Pacific region met in Samoa for the very first time for the Regional Pacific Island States Parliamentary Workshop to advocate for Improved Compliance with the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) as well as promoting more effective participation by Women Parliamentarians in Defence, Security and Interior Committees.

The key focus was to discuss and develop a Plan of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. A crucial part of that is understanding the threat that the trading of SALW poses to the security, stability, sustainable development and general economic welfare of all regions worldwide as well as future challenges that the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons poses in the Pacific region.

Another key component of the workshop was to encourage parliamentarians of the need to review and strengthen domestic firearms legislations that are in place in their respective countries to meet any present and future challenges faced by the Pacific Island nations. The workshop also highlighted the significance placed on encouraging greater participation by women parliamentarians in Defence, Security and Interior Committees of their respective Parliaments.

Throughout this two day workshop, Governments were encouraged to explore a variety of international treaties which seek to enhance Global Security such as the Arms Trade Treaty as well as Treaties that seek to prevent the development, manufacture, and storing of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in addition to promoting implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions addressing the non-proliferation of WMDs to Non State Actors.

In June 2014, the Government of Samoa ratified the Arms Trade Treaty and then submitted a comprehensive Report on its Compliance with the UN Programme of Action Addressing the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2016. In the context of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Samoa ratified the Biological Weapons Convention in September 2017. As such, Samoa serves as an excellent inspiration to a number of other countries in the region to follow suit.

The Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action against the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons is scheduled for June this year at the UN Headquarters in New York City, and part of the workshop served to encourage parliamentarians to urge their respective Governments to ensure adequate representation at the conference in New York.

As a result of the workshop, a Plan of Action was developed to serve as a guideline towards the eradication of such trade in the Pacific region.

The two day workshop was facilitated by the Parliamentarians on Global Action organization in collaboration with the Legislative Assembly of Samoa and attendees included members from Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Niue, New Zealand, Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands.