



Statement by Mr. Peter Barcroft

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Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

National Assembly of Cabo Verde

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President of the National Assembly of Cape Verde, Government Ministers, Members of Parliament from all Lusophone countries present, representatives from international organizations and civil society, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Parliamentarians for Global Action, an organization of over 1,300 individual Members of Parliament from more than 140 countries worldwide, dedicated to promoting human rights, defending peace and security and acting against discrimination in all its forms, please allow me to express our sincere appreciation to you all for participating in this workshop of Lusophone States here in Praia, Cape Verde.

We are profoundly grateful to the National Assembly of Cape Verde and to our PGA Members, in particular Diputado Jose Manuel Sanches for your efforts, extraordinary good will and kindness that you have extended to our organization and all our Members from Lusophone countries present here today.

I also want to acknowledge at the outset the United Nations Trust Facility supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) for its generous support and without whom this Workshop would not be possible.

As you will see from the Program in front of you, we have an ambitious agenda

However, before we commence the formal operative part of our programme, and to help us all in our discussions and deliberations today and tomorrow, I would just like to take up some of your time to highlight what is the main purpose and objective of this Workshop.

The Arms Trade Treaty is an international convention that was adopted in April 2013, opened for signature in June 2013 and entered into force for all those countries party to it on December 24th, 2014.

130 countries signed the Arms Trade Treaty within the prescribed period before it entered into force, including, I am pleased to say, 7 countries represented here today from the Lusophone world.

To date, 87 countries have also formally ratified the Treaty, agreeing to become States Parties to the treaty and be bound by its provisions.

The purpose of this Treaty is to put in place a set of strong standards to better regulate the international trade in arms as well as to take steps to prevent or at least mitigate the illicit or illegal trade in arms.

Many of you come from countries that have witnessed and experienced first-hand the human devastation caused by illegal arms in circulation in your respective societies

And illegal arms and weapons circulation not only causes death and despair on a massive scale across many countries and regions of the world

The indirect impact of this terrible trade, while it cannot be counted in human lives, can and has been just as devastating.

Illegal arms, armed violence and conflict all contribute greatly to instability and impede the Rule of Law

This in turn has a very negative impact on development goals and priorities in countries, many often seeking to move beyond conflict and abject poverty

Scarce national funds are eaten by paying for the costs of hospitals and medical expenses of those being impacted by violence, instead of being spent on education and economic infrastructure, without which no real sustainable development and progress is possible.

As we will also discuss in part today and also tomorrow morning, and to make matters even worse, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has been repeatedly demonstrated to show that it is the most vulnerable members of society, women and children, who are disproportionately impacted by this trade. Women are victimized not only directly in terms of loss of life, serious injuries and rape on a massive scale, but, also, indirectly, by often having to assume head of household duties when their husbands become victims of this trade.

The Arms Trade Treaty was the first treaty regulating arms that specifically introduced a requirement to consider whether gender based violence could be caused if arms exports under consideration would be allowed to proceed.

So what is the purpose and objective of our Workshop?

The purpose of our Workshop is to ensure that all of you obtain a much better understanding of the Arms Trade Treaty and its importance, not just for countries who have experienced the terrible effects of the illegal trade in arms, but also other countries who may experience it in the future.

The truth of the matter, as we all know, is that we live in a volatile and unpredictable world. One day a country is experiencing the benefits of peace and prosperity, the next day it is plunged into a crisis which few anticipated.

So, as I like to do at all our Workshops, I want to encourage all of you to see this treaty also as sort of an insurance policy, one way to at least reduce the likelihood of have to experience the terrible effects of armed violence and conflict in the years ahead.

I have spoken about the purposed of this Workshop, but what is our collective objective

The objective, quite simply, is a hope ' that 3, 6, maybe 9 months from now, working with your colleagues in Government and civil society, that many of you will come from the most recent countries to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

It is a process that must include everyone for it to be effective and successful.

We in PGA are always at your disposal to offer any practical, technical and legal advice relating to any initiatives you wish to take to promote ratification of the ATT in your country.

Seven countries from the Lusophone States have signed the ATT. This was an important achievement.

However, to date, only one country among you has taken the next vital step of formally ratifying the Treaty.

We know, however, that at least 2 or 3 of you are getting very close to also taking this step which is very encouraging to hear.

For any treaty to be effective internationally, it must be enforced by as many countries as possible

What a wonderful legacy of this Workshop it would be if we could look back, maybe a year from now and see the majority of your countries having taken the important step of joining the Arms Trade Treaty.

And what a powerful signal it would send to the International Community of the importance that the international Lusophone community attaches to this Treaty and its vital goals for humanity.

At the end of our Workshop tomorrow, we will adopt a short Plan of Action which will contain a number of suggestions for steps that you can take to promote ratification and implementation of the ATT in your respective countries

I hope you will find it a useful document in any follow up actions you take after our event

Again, we in PGA are always at your disposal if you need any advice of any kind

For those of you Members of Parliament who are not yet members of PGA, I would encourage you to take this step

The organization offers a great international network of support and multiple opportunities to interact with and meet with like-minded colleagues around the world.

We have a number of different programmes so there is something for everyone!

You will find membership forms in your folder so if you wish to complete them and give them back to either my colleague Thiago Carvalho or myself, we shall ensure that they are processed without delay upon our return to New York.

Let me conclude by once again thanking you all most sincerely for taking the time out of your very busy schedules to be with us here in Praia today and tomorrow to discuss.

Thank you.