



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Acción Mundial de Parlamentarios
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Madam Deputy Speaker, Members of Parliament, Distinguished Guests

In my capacity as Convenor of PGA's Peace & Democracy Programme, I am very pleased to be here today in the National Assembly of Windhoek.

Please allow me at the outset to extend our sincere thanks and warm appreciation to the National Assembly of Namibia for hosting this Regional Parliamentary Workshop and for the extraordinary assistance they have provided

Six years ago the National Assembly of Senegal also hosted a similar Workshop and I am therefore very aware of the significant work that goes into preparations of this kind

May I also take this opportunity to thank the Foreign Ministry of Germany. Without your generous support, we would not be having this Workshop today and tomorrow here in Windhoek.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In two weeks from today, the Member States of the United Nations will resume their negotiations on an Arms Treaty at the United Nations in New York

We, therefore, have a truly unique opportunity in the next 2 days to make an important contribution to this process.

As many of you are already aware, the purpose of this Arms Trade Treaty would be to better regulate the international arms trade to ensure that conventional weapons are not exported to countries or regions where they may be misused

The Arms Trade Treaty is a treaty for which the world has waited far too long.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people are injured or lose their lives as a result of armed violence

Too often this armed violence is caused by poor control of the export and import of arms to and in countries and regions experiencing armed violence or conflict or countries/regions which are vulnerable to such violence and conflict

This tragic reality is a global phenomenon

But no region has suffered as greatly - and for so long - as our own.

I am particularly pleased, in this respect, to see so many of my fellow legislators today from countries which have experienced at first hand this devastation

Sadly, in some of your countries, you are still experiencing or recovering from the tragic effects of this scourge.

You need no reminders from me about how important it is that we leave this Workshop not only with a better understanding of the challenges posed by the inadequate regulation of conventional weapons – but also with a firm commitment to take action when we return to our respective countries.

And that we take this action in the coming weeks.

I hope no one will mind if I also say, very briefly, how pleased I am to see Francophone Africa so well represented here

The devastation of conflict and armed violence knows no boundaries, no linguistic divide.

Before the end of our Workshop tomorrow, we will – together - adopt a Plan of Action which will include a number of practical steps that we can take, individually and collectively, to address this national, regional and international nightmare.

I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to take some or all of these steps in this Plan of Action, promptly upon your return home.

PGA stands for Parliamentarians for Global Action

Our organization has distinguished itself in its 30 years of existence by acting, not just saying.

Leading by example, not by words.

Practicing what we Preach.

We must uphold this proud tradition here in Namibia and, especially when we return to our parliaments and countries in the next few days.

Please see this as a Beginning, not an End.

This Plan of Action will be launched here in Windhoek.

I am pleased to inform you that I will be fortunate enough to travel to the ATT Conference in New York in 2 weeks' time

At this Conference, together with 4 other PGA Members, we will hold a press conference at the United Nations to publicize the Windhoek Plan of Action.

While it is a Plan which will be adopted here in Namibia, the steps – or points of action – that it will contain – can – and we hope will - be acted upon by MPs around the world

As advocates and lawmakers, Members of Parliament have an essential role to play.

To date, PGA Members of Parliament have been active in promoting improved domestic firearms legislation, facilitating the process of ratification of regional conventions, enhancing conformity of their national legislation with the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons as well as advocating strongly for the ATT in many countries around the world.

PGA is the only parliamentary organization member of the Steering Board of Control Arms and played a substantial role in drafting The Control Arms Global Parliamentary Declaration on the Arms Trade Treaty.

Over 2,100 Members of Parliament from 114 countries worldwide signed this Declaration, emphasizing their commitment to an Arms Trade Treaty.

I am glad to say that many of you in this room also signed it, along with your colleagues in your parliaments back home.

We have provided a copy of this Declaration in your Registration Package

However, before we parliamentarians can undertake our important responsibilities to advocate for ratification of an ATT, for its speedy entry into force and to seek its implementation, we must make sure that the Treaty to be agreed is a good Treaty.

Representatives from our Governments, from our Foreign Ministries, will travel to New York in only 2 weeks' time for a final round of negotiations

In the Plan of Action that we adopt here, we must therefore make sure that we highlight what we, as parliamentarians, believe is essential be included in this Treaty.

Our voices must be heard too for it is we, as legislators, that have the responsibility of supporting ratification, drafting and implementing the ATT, when it is agreed.

For us to do so, we must be confident it is a strong Treaty.

In parallel, my brothers and sisters, we can do more to support the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

We can push our governments and we can act ourselves to make sure that our national legislation is in greater conformity with the UN Programme of Action.

The UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons on the one hand and the Arms Trade Treaty, on the other are highly complimentary endeavours.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Fellow Parliamentarians, Distinguished Guests

Eleanor Roosevelt once correctly observed that "*The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.*"

I believe she said this because those who believe in the beauty of their dreams convert those dreams into reality and make it their future

We must make the Arms Trade Treaty our reality and our future – here in Africa – and around the world.

We must cast aside the horrific indictment of humanity that our inaction on this has created.

To the millions of victims of armed violence and for all future generations – we owe nothing less.

Thank you.