

Statement by H.E. Onno Hückmann
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany
on the occasion of
ADDRESSING THE ILLICIT TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS -
SUPPORTING AN ARMS TRADE TREATY
THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF NAMIBIA
WINDHOEK
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Honourable Loide Kasingo, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly,
Members of Parliament,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In just about two weeks, negotiations will be starting again over a treaty that could turn out to be both innovative and groundbreaking in several respects.

Innovative because it is indeed the first attempt to regulate international trade in arms and ground-breaking because it would strongly and positively affect the preservation of international peace and security.

If the international community succeeds in drafting and agreeing on this treaty, I firmly believe 2013 will be seen as a milestone in the history of arms export control. And the Arms Trade Treaty could be the first treaty in the area of disarmament, arms control and arms export control to be successfully concluded under the auspices of the United Nations in this millennium.

We are proud to be able to support this workshop which looks at the important role of parliamentarians in the Arms Trade Treaty process. We strongly welcome the interest that representatives from Africa take in this effort. We just recently held a workshop dedicated to the Arms Trade Treaty with strong participation from this region. At this moment, a further conference is taking place in Addis Abeba for African negotiators for the Arms Trade Treaty, which Germany is co-funding.

Recently the German government adopted the new strategy “Shaping globalization – Expanding Partnerships – Sharing Responsibility”. The strategy addresses the fact that the world is becoming increasingly multipolar. States that were long thought of as developing or “newly industrialized” countries are now an influential force in shaping international policy in an interdependent world. They are economic motors and key regional players, active beyond their own regional boundaries. They are confidently taking their place on the world stage, in international relations, and are assuming ever more responsibility for global issues. In our view they are more than just emerging economies. They are new players with a substantial role in international decision making. We and our traditional partners hope to develop innovative policies to address global issues and build alliances for their implementation together with them, by means of rule-based, multilateral global governance realized through legitimate and effective international institutions.

In short, we want to broaden the basis of our international cooperation in topics relevant for globalization. Those topics include, among issues like economic and financial policy, climate change and energy security or sustainable development, in particular international peace and security. These matters have perhaps so far been those where we have focused mostly on cooperation with our traditional partners. Interaction with partners in other regions of the world has been notably less intense, and this is what we want to change. All states shaping globalization und accepting responsibly should work together to tackle these overarching problems.

Arms trade has important bearings on international peace and security. We are convinced that preparing an international conference on the Arms Trade Treaty is a matter particularly useful for broadening the scope of our international security political cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to briefly dwell on a few aspects that we should remember when talking about an Arms Trade Treaty:

Firstly, why did we embark on this process?

Secondly, what are the prerequisites to bring the negotiations to a successful end?

And thirdly, what could come afterwards?

Firstly, the absence of international standards for trade in conventional arms has negative and far-reaching consequences.

Many countries operate only rudimentary arms export control systems or have no such systems at all. As a result, there is a flourishing market in illicit weapons, especially for small arms and light weapons, which tend to end up wherever conflicts are under way. These arms – and particularly small arms and light weapons – are used to commit serious human rights violations on a massive scale. The appalling plight of the civilian population and the huge number of people killed in civil wars send a message that cannot be ignored: the international community must act to bring these weapons under better control.

In this context a treaty to regulate the international arms trade that is universally agreed and also effectively implemented on the ground can help prevent armed conflict as well as curb transnational organized crime and terrorism. In the long term, moreover, the chances of curbing the illicit market for weapons of all types and limiting irresponsible arms trade will improve as well. Curbing illicit transfers which will eventually flow from a better regulation of legal arms transfers is in our own security interest.

Secondly, it is clear that the negotiations will be tough going. Opinions on the issues at stake cover a wide spectrum.

Although we have achieved already a substantial degree of convergence during the negotiations last July – some would say a surprisingly high level of convergence -, countries continue to hold differing and sometimes controversial views on the scope of the treaty, the criteria for issuing export licences and the modalities of implementation by the future States Parties. Nevertheless, there appears to be sufficient common ground to find agreement. This is reflected inter alia by the overwhelming majority in the UN General Assembly which supported the resolution that makes the outcome of the last Arms Trade Treaty Conference, the 26 July 2012 Draft Treaty, the basis for our negotiations in March 2013.

An Arms Trade Treaty will only deliver added value, I believe, if it requires countries to examine the pros and cons of such transfers on the basis of a set of clear and ambitious criteria laying down the highest possible common standards.

An Arms Trade Treaty must be as comprehensive as possible, in terms not only of the goods and activities covered but also the countries that sign up to it. It is particularly important that Small Arms and Light Weapons be included.

An Arms Trade Treaty, which enjoys broad support, is signed up to by as many States as possible and becomes legally binding and will thus acquire the legitimacy it needs. To be effective, however, the treaty must impose clear obligations on both exporters and importers around the world. And it must ensure these obligations are fulfilled.

With these ideas in mind, we will work on the basis of the latest draft treaty as of July 26th 2012. With a number of slight, but important amendments, this draft captures the essence of what we believe an Arms Trade Treaty could look like. I hope that this seminar will help us all to identify and consider the few remaining issues that need to be addressed during the conference.

Thirdly and this brings me to my last point, we believe that an Arms Trade Treaty can only be a first step in the right direction and needs a careful follow up once it has been agreed upon.

We are standing ready to assist countries in setting up or improving their respective control systems. Practitioners from participating countries will need to sit together and decide how to implement an Arms Trade Treaty in the best way – once we have been successful in New York.

Practical measures and Best Practices will in the end be necessary to spread sound and systematic export controls to all parts of the world. Germany has been funding projects for small arms control with a particular focus on Sub Saharan Africa. Countries where we are active include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi. We will be ready to cooperate in the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. Germany has pledged 500.000 € to a newly set up UNODA "Multi-donor Support Facility for the Arms Trade Treaty and UN

Programme of Action” on small arms. We consider the establishment of this facility as an important contribution to an effective implementation of a future Arms Trade Treaty and the UN Programme of Action to combat illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The new facility in the future could give a financial basis to Arms Trade Treaty projects. In particular, Least Developed States will need support for the implementation of an Arms Trade Treaty, as a lot of legislative work and new administrative structures in customs, import and export controls will be necessary. We are aware that for many developing countries the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty will be a question of available resources. Contributing to the fund will allow us/the industrialized countries to show that we take the concerns of the developing world seriously.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Legitimacy, security, responsibility: in any discussion of arms trade issues these are key elements. Unlike other types of goods, arms have special features that make them potentially dangerous. Their uncontrolled proliferation and concentration are likely to have highly destabilizing consequences. However it is important to remember, too, that as long as arms serve legitimate purposes, including the exercise of the right of self-defence guaranteed by the UN Charter, they are an important instrument of state authority. If there are legitimate purposes, however, which justify the use of arms, the logical consequence is that we must consider how best to ensure they are used and traded responsibly.

We are glad that this principle is reflected in the latest draft treaty text and widely accepted among conference participants. The challenge at the negotiations in March in New York will be to agree upon a universally valid and binding document that strikes a balance between the general principles of free trade, countries’ multifaceted security needs as well as the need for responsibility in the international arms trade.

I wish you all stimulating and productive discussions which may further our shared vision, a strong and robust Arms Trade Treaty in 2013.

Thank you for your attention.