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Assistant Speaker  
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**Address: ATT**

*Venue: Stamford Plaza, Albert Road, Auckland*

*Date: Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2013*

*Time: 5.30 pm*

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**Good evening.**

**I would like to thank Hon Murray McCully for inviting me here on the occasion of the launch of this very important Pacific model legislation, and to acknowledge Dell Higginson, our Disarmament ambassador.**

**Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), an international association of over 1,000 legislators in 130 countries worldwide, of which I am privileged to be President, has been a strong advocate on disarmament issues going back over 30 years to when we were founded.**

**Many of our members played an instrumental role in persuading their respective governments to ratify the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and, later, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Similarly, in the context of the Chemical Weapons Convention, several PGA Members worked hard and successfully to ensure that their countries ratified the Treaty in an expeditious manner thereby accelerating its entry into force. So, against this background, it was just a natural step for PGA and myself to become actively involved around the world in support of a treaty which**

seeks to ensure the more responsible control and transfer of conventional weapons. In 2012, PGA, as a Steering Committee Member of Control Arms, the global umbrella organisation of civil society actors working towards an ATT, played a leading role in persuading over 2,100 MPs in 114 countries worldwide to sign the Global Parliamentary Declaration on the ATT. This document contained a clear commitment to work not only towards securing adoption of the ATT, but also, crucially, seeking its ratification and implementation, once adopted. I had the honour to present this Declaration to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon at a public ceremony at the UN in New York in July 2012.

Let me be clear – we are not trying to rid the world of conventional weapons – their presence in our world is a reality, whether we like it or not – but simply to ensure that their transfer/export/control is carried out in a way which is much more responsible than is the case right now.

On a more personal level, I think it is important to remember that legislators often have constituents who have been directly impacted by irresponsible transfer/control of arms which has resulted in loss of life or terrible, life-long injuries. We owe it to them and their families, as we do to everyone else, to make sure we have a robust ATT in place – and as soon as possible. It is a terrible indictment of all of us that we live in a world where tens of thousands of people lose their lives or are seriously injured every year because of inadequate regulation of the transfer/export of conventional weapons. It is estimated that 747,000 people die each year from firearm-related violence. This death rate stems from the fact that there are two bullets for every person in the world, with one in every ten living people owning or having access to a gun. Further, for every person killed from armed violence, ten

are injured, meaning 7.47 million people are injured every year from armed violence. The horror and magnitude of these numbers speak for themselves.

Parliamentarians are extremely 'valuable', if I can put it that way, in this whole process – start to finish. What a lot of people do not perhaps fully understand is that agreeing on the text of an Arms Trade Treaty – while obviously extremely important and until which time nothing else can happen – is only the beginning. It is the first in four stages – or 25% of the process – if we are really being honest with ourselves.

By that I mean that the first stage is to agree on – or adopt - a treaty. This took place in April 2013 at the UN in New York.

After that, countries have to sign and ratify the treaty for it to actually have effect in their countries, and 50 UN Member States must ratify the ATT before it will enter into force. Having opened for signature only six months ago, 115 countries have now signed and 8 have ratified the ATT. I hope it is not too long before New Zealand also ratifies.

Thirdly, even when the treaty is ratified, every country still needs to put in place the necessary legislation to implement or 'domesticate' it within their own legal systems. We are here today to begin that important process for our region. And fourth, and finally, even after ratification, there has to be oversight/review of implementation to make sure the law is being properly implemented and enforced.

In all four of these stages, legislators play an absolutely pivotal and – in some instances – a unique role which no one else can play. This is no exaggeration. We

are the ones who are very close to government decision makers so our advocacy in support of this ATT is extremely important. As we all know, often Government Ministers are still MPs and MPs frequently go on to become Ministers. So this 'revolving door'- if you will - does place MPs in a rather privileged position when it comes to advocating for international treaty adherence. We are also the ones who, once the treaty is agreed upon, and again because of our proximity to the executive branch of government, can have a quick and decisive impact in persuading governments to ratify the treaty. PGA has previously played a decisive role in the context of the Rome Statute of the ICC, in accelerating the process of ratification in 76 of the 122 ratifications worldwide. And we want to do the same for the ATT. We are the ones – let us not forget that legislators are often called lawmakers – who draft legislation, review it and discuss it before it is finally adopted. And, yes, it is to Parliamentarians that falls the essential task, even when the implementing legislation is in place, to make sure it is actually having the effect it is meant to have, through exercise of our parliamentary oversight prerogatives and functions.

I applaud the New Zealand government's actions in bringing this legislation to the House. I encourage the Government to share it widely among UN Member States, in particular with our Neighbour States in the Pacific Islands. We in PGA will do likewise with our colleagues in Parliaments here in our region as a form of guidance for them as they set about the same task of domesticating the ATT.

In closing, I wish to emphasise the importance of parliamentarians working together. We here in New Zealand stand ready to serve our brothers and sisters in the Pacific, and if we can be of any help at all please feel free to contact us. It is

**useful to get traction at the local level on the Arms Trade Treaty, and by working with Members of Parliament anything is possible.**