



German Bundestag's Subcommittee on the United Nations, International Organizations and Globalization and the Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

Joint public hearing on the Arms Trade Treaty

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Mr. Lechte, [(FDP) Chairman of the Subcommittee on the United Nations]

Mr. Hoehn, [(Die Linke), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Disarmament and Arms Control]

Distinguished Members of the Bundestag,

Distinguished experts and guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I address you today against the backdrop of a persistently complex international security landscape, characterized by heightened tensions and growing distrust among nations leading to unrestrained global arms competition.

Since launching his Agenda for Disarmament in 2018, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has repeatedly expressed grave concern over the current state of global affairs.

The world remains over armed while the worrisome trend of the growing military expenditures has continued, reaching an approximate US\$1.981 trillion in 2020 . The global circulation of small arms and light weapons is now estimated at around 1 billion.

Despite the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire over a year ago, arms continue to flow to volatile regions, further fueling violence, conflict and suffering. The illicit diversion of instruments of war further fuel armed conflict and lead to the violation of the rights of some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Meanwhile, the multilateral disarmament architecture, which the international community has painstakingly constructed, continues to be eroded.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented strains on our social and economic systems. It is especially during these trying times that the tenets of disarmament and arms control remain ever relevant – the least diversion of resources to arms can ensure that the international community “Builds Back Better” from this pandemic. This crisis has also shown

us, more than ever, the need for strengthened multilateralism and concerted action.

Distinguished Members of the Bundestag,

The Arms Trade Treaty, or ATT, established the first ever internationally applicable legal standards for the trade of conventional weapons. It provides a much-needed international framework for a more responsible international arms trade, to prevent human suffering caused by the illicit trade and diversion of conventional weapons. The Treaty's broad scope—covering all major categories of conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons—is paramount.

In recognition of the critical role that the ATT plays in regulating the arms trade, the speed of adherence to the ATT by States has been swift. So far, 110 States have committed to adhere to the highest common standards in international arms transfers.

Seven out of the top ten exporters of arms, including Germany, are States Parties.

However, the reality is that the remaining three countries, which control approximately 60% of the global arms export market, are not. Furthermore, seven of the top ten importers remain outside the Treaty. These figures must change if the goals of the Treaty are to be achieved.

The accession of China to the Treaty has sent a strong signal to the international community, and I hope to see more engagement by other important actors, particularly from those among the top export countries.

The ATT's provisions are essential components for ensuring responsible arms trade.

They call for the enforcement of arms embargoes and for the establishment of national control systems, and forbid the sale of weapons that could be used in genocide, crimes against humanity or by violent extremists or organized crime gangs.

The Treaty has also provided a platform for States to discuss topical issues in international arms trade. For example, this year's Presidency – Sierra Leone – has identified as priority theme the strengthening of efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light

weapons and ensuring efficient stockpile management. The sharing of best practices, as well as discussions on cross-fertilization with complementary instruments such as the Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, will no doubt be invaluable for States.

In addition, the Treaty was also the first ever legally binding multilateral instrument to recognize the connection between the international arms trade and gender-based violence. Discussions on the linkage between gender and arms in the ATT and other fora have significantly contributed to increased awareness and expanded knowledge base on this issue.

Distinguished Members of the Bundestag,

In his address to the Bundestag in December last year, Secretary-General Guterres recognized how Germany – being mindful of history and the burden of responsibility – has assumed global leadership and is a pillar of multilateralism.

This is of course also the case in disarmament and arms control. As one of the major arms exporters today, Germany is deeply cognizant of its special responsibility to ensure that arms transfers are legitimate and responsible.

I commend Germany for playing an active role in the promotion of the ATT and other conventional arms frameworks, including as the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

Recognizing the need to support action at the country level through capacity building and legal, legislative and technical assistance, Germany has not only played an instrumental role in the operationalization of the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund, including as its Chair, but has continued to be a consistent and reliable donor for the Fund.

In addition, Germany, together with Australia, created the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, or UNSCAR for short, in 2013. To date, the UNSCAR has financed 55 projects facilitating the globalization and implementation of the ATT, by supporting initiatives on capacity-building, legislative assistance, baseline assessments and public awareness raising at the global, regional and national levels across all regions.

In this vein, I also warmly welcome the recent European Union Council Decision to support the ATT Secretariat in assisting States Parties in strengthening their national arms export control systems, a key step in preventing the diversion of, and illicit trade in arms. The EU and its members have consistently supported the strengthening of not only national capacities, but also efforts to foster cooperation and dialogue at the regional level, with a view to reduce military spending and build confidence among key actors. The convening role played by regional organizations will continue to be essential in these endeavors.

Distinguished Members of the Bundestag,

In concluding, I would like to recall the purpose of the ATT, as elaborated in its text— to contribute to international peace, security, and stability; reduce human suffering; and promote cooperation, transparency and responsible action thereby building confidence.

Germany's steadfast leadership and unwavering support will be essential in achieving these goals.

My Office and I, together with the ATT Secretariat, remain committed to providing whatever support we can to this cause.

Thank you very much for your attention.