



Open Ended Working Group: Towards an Arms Trade Treaty

Intervention by Ambassador John Duncan,

4 March 2009

Scope of a potential Arms Trade Treaty

Mr Chairman ,

My delegation has been impressed and encouraged by the wide range of views expressed by distinguished colleagues yesterday and today, during our exchange of views on what could be the Scope of a feasible ATT.

In my last formal intervention I underlined our view that in examining how an ATT might work in practice, it is important to keep firmly in mind that we are living in a very different world from the one which existed when most of the existing international and regional instruments were created. The historical context has changed significantly and we need to draw the lessons from that change.

This is where we think the discussion on scope should focus: the real world impact of the unregulated and irresponsible trade in arms. An approach that our distinguished colleagues from Trinidad and Tobago, Nigeria and others summed up very well yesterday and today.

When considering Scope we agree with others, that simple logic demands that we should consider not only the physical items that should be included, but also the types of transfers and activities that are covered by the arms trade. Consequently issues such as unlicensed transfers, leasing, brokering are all issues that need to be given serious thought for inclusion.

In terms of the physical items that should be included under the Scope of a future ATT the United Kingdom believes that real world experience shows us that the ATT should cover all conventional arms listed in the UN Conventional Arms Registry and other Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

We believe there is a strong case that the scope should also cover munitions for the equipment listed above, and the technology to produce and maintain such equipment, as well as their parts and components.

We heard a number of delegates propose using the UN Charter as a basis for consideration of an ATT. The Charter is certainly a clear guide to the goals and objectives of an ATT. But should also inform our consideration of the scope of an ATT.

We agree with the widely held view yesterday that an ATT should not affect domestic controls in any way, nor hinder the inherent right of states to exercise legitimate self defence.

But, in our view, the scope of an ATT should be wide enough for its real world purpose. If we want to address the human security challenge, while at the same time support legitimate trade and promote economic co-operation, tackle terrorism, we need to adopt the widest possible coverage to be able to do this.

So, to conclude, as our distinguished Egyptian colleague said yesterday, we are looking at a new instrument. One that is closest to an arms export control treaty. But it will be more complex than that.

As the resolution makes clear an ATT is to “Bring benefit to all”. Consequently as I mentioned yesterday it aims to support the legitimate and responsible trade. If it is to achieve this, then a future ATT should arguably comprise elements of and draw on instruments such as those that established the Kimberly Process and also the ISOs – the international commercial standards. The ATT is therefore something quite new. An instrument that will deal effectively with the international challenges we face. The ATT is certainly not a zero sum game and not a disarmament treaty.

I agree that we need to be looking at this as a fresh page on which to write what we need. There is every reason to draw on existing work where this is useful, but as the general tone of the conversation yesterday indicated, no single existing list will be adequate for our global needs. We need to amalgamate the appropriate parts of what we already have but that does not mean that we would seek to make legally binding existing instruments that are only politically binding. We would draw on existing best practice for our new instrument.

Thank you, Mr Chairman