

TOWARDS AN ARMS TRADE TREATY

SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR JOHN DUNCAN AT BREAKFAST MEETING OF GOVERNMENTS AND NGOs, NEW YORK 3 JULY 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues in the Costa Rican, Kenyan, Norwegian and East Timor Missions to the UN for organising this third meeting of governments and NGOs on the proposed Arms Trade Treaty.

Earlier speakers have eloquently described the *raison d'être* for an ATT and the overall strategy leading to a resolution at this October's First Committee of the UNGA. I would like to concentrate on four key elements which will be crucial to our success in taking forward this project; commitment, momentum, being clear about the obstacles and maintaining focus.

You will all know of the former British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw's personal commitment to the ATT project. I am happy to confirm that his successor, Margaret Beckett is also a very strong supporter of the project. As a former Development Minister she is all too aware of the impact of small arms proliferation in some of the world's poorest countries. The ATT initiative now has cross party support in the British Parliament and I would draw your attention to the recent statements by Prime Minister Blair and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Cameron.

For my own part as the newly appointed Ambassador for Multilateral Arms Control and Disarmament, I feel privileged to be allowed to help take forward this important dossier. Over the past 25 years I have spent a considerable time in crisis management ranging from Sudan in the mid-80s, through to the Kosovo conflict. Consequently, I share your concern to combat the irresponsible supply of conventional weapons. But equally, from my younger years in Africa, I grew up with sporting guns, and I can confirm that the ATT is not, as some have suggested, aimed at restricting the legitimate rights of individuals to hold such weapons in accordance with their country's legislation.

On momentum, I believe we must continue to harness the drivers which have brought us thus far. I identify these as firstly, the moral case and in this I applaud the hard work of those in civil society such as Saferworld, Amnesty, Oxfam and IANSA. I would also draw your attention to the recent statement by the Papal Nuncio to the RevCon

on SALW and the specific reference to the Holy See's support for the ATT initiative (see link [http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/arms060628holyse-
eng.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/arms060628holyse-
eng.pdf)) this is very welcome. Secondly, the industrial case. It is all too often forgotten that certainly as far as the UK is concerned, industry also supports this initiative. The ATT is not aimed at abolishing the arms trade, but in ensuring that it is conducted in a responsible manner. Equally, countries who have in the past gained a reputation as "low cost" arms suppliers, have recognised that indiscriminate supply of weaponry can destroy one's future markets. This makes little long term sense. Far better to develop these markets responsibly and to allow them to import the full range of one's products.

I believe we also need to recognise the obstacles ahead. We are all conscious that the beginning of the 21st century is experiencing a paradigm shift, which we refer to loosely as globalisation. However the effects of this shift are not only economic and social, they also affect profoundly the international political scene and thus make it doubly difficult to secure consensus on new initiatives.

In building consensus on what an Arms Trade Treaty should cover, we need to recognise that there are currently differences of view on some of the key issues such as terrorism, non-state actors, and the link with development. Accordingly, we need to proceed with care, discuss openly and frankly our different interpretations, to ensure that we do not simply end up with an ATT which represents the lowest common denominator.

By the same token, we need to ensure we have a clear focus on the purpose of an ATT and the process we are engaged in. The ATT is often confused with the UK's transfer controls initiative which is being discussed this week in New York. They are significantly different and we need to keep this in mind.

Transfer controls are a bottom up building block approach aimed at developing politically binding guidelines on small arms transfers. These are intended to help the regions most affected to close loop-holes in existing controls which are being exploited by the unscrupulous. TC guidelines will by their nature recognise the particular requirements and ambitions of different regions. Consequently, some regions will agree very stringent guidelines which cover areas which would not be acceptable at a global level eg the penalties for illicit civilian possession, where some regions favour capital punishment.

However, as the various world regions build up their respective guidelines, we believe it will, over time, be possible to develop globally accepted norms on small arms transfers.

The Arms Trade Treaty as its name suggests is a much broader concept. It recognises that in many of the conflicts we observe in the world today, a wide range of weaponry, not just small arms, is being used. To be effective, an ATT will require both the demand and the supply side of the industry to work together. Many countries already have stringent export controls from which it should be possible to develop agreed legally binding measures to ensure that the arms trade is handled responsibly, and it is right that the development of an ATT should be handled in the United Nations.

This is an ambitious agenda, and we should not forget that the idea of an Arms Trade Treaty has a very long history. However, it is the view of many of the world's political and spiritual leaders that it is an idea whose time has come.

I thank you for your attention.