

UNITED NATIONS



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TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE ARMS TRADE TREATY

INFORMAL INTERSESSIONAL MEETING

25 – 27 July 2008

Harrison Conference Centre at Glen Cove, Long Island, New York State

Message of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

**Delivered by Ms. Pamela Maonga, Deputy Chief
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**Excellencies,
Distinguished Experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I send warm greetings to you all and my deepest regrets that I could not join you at this important meeting. I wish to extend my gratitude to the Geneva Forum for putting this meeting together.

This informal intersessional meeting is very useful and timely because it affords an invaluable opportunity not only to NGOs, civil society, industry and others to share their views with the experts, but also to those Member States who could not be included in the GGE. The value of the exchanges that will take place during the course of these two days cannot therefore be overemphasized.

We are all aware of the enormous efforts that NGOs and civil society have deployed to promote the process towards the examining of the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. We also acknowledge the role that NGOs and civil society played in the process that led to the adoption of resolution 61/89 of 6 December 2006.

Thanks also to their vigorous and relentless campaign, an unprecedented number of Member States submitted their views in response to resolution 61/89 on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms.

As you are well aware, the resolution also requested the Secretary-General to establish a group of governmental experts (GGE), to examine the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, and to transmit the report of the group of experts to the Assembly for consideration at its sixty-third session. This was one of the most difficult groups to constitute with more than sixty countries having expressed interest in being included. The Group, comprising 28 experts from 28 countries selected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution started its work in February this year.

In these brief remarks around the theme of “The role of the GGE mechanism in the UN disarmament processes: a historical perspective”, I would like to note that Groups of Governmental Experts have played a very critical role in the UN disarmament process. Very often, when an issue of great importance which requires serious consideration, such as this one, is placed on the agenda of the General Assembly, it needs an in-depth analysis by a small group of experts prior to its consideration by the whole. Such groups are established on the basis of a General Assembly mandate addressed to the Secretary-General who determines the composition of the Group and appoints experts after inviting nominations from Member States that have been selected for representation in the Group.

The logic behind the establishment of GGEs is that, it would be very cumbersome and time consuming to undertake such analyses in a large meeting such as the open-ended-working groups. GGEs not only determine whether or not an issue is ripe for action by the General Assembly, they also facilitate the discussions by narrowing down the issues that

the deliberations could focus on. They are like the preliminary stage towards any negotiation process.

For example, as some of you may be aware, prior to the adoption of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Secretary-General established a GGE that was tasked with studying the feasibility of developing such an instrument. The work of that GGE culminated in a recommendation that led to the establishment of an open-ended-working group which negotiated the International Tracing Instrument.

Likewise, the GGE on an ATT is expected to formulate recommendations on the way forward. While recognizing the difficulties, we hope that the Group will be successful in adopting a consensus report

I wish your meeting every success.