



**Fifth Conference of States Parties to the ATT (CSP5)**

**Thematic Discussion on Gender and Gender Based Violence**

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Thank you Ambassador Karklins for your kind introduction. And thank you also for championing the important thematic focus on gender and gender-based violence, an issue that is close to my heart, at this year's Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, which this panel can hopefully contribute to.

In an often gender-blind arms control and disarmament world, the inclusion of Article 7.4 in the Arms Trade Treaty is historic because it has elevated gender and gender-based violence concerns to such an important level. It represents an important step towards the overarching goal of ensuring that gender dimensions remain an integral part of the international security agenda.

Affording equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities to women and men, and to boys and girls, is a human right and a prerequisite for durable peace, security and development.

The focus of CSP5 on gender and gender-based violence should provide momentum for bringing actionable and concrete change at country and global levels to the gender-arms control discourse. Let me focus on three areas for investment if we are to be serious about gender in arms control: 1) we need to invest in an inclusive decision-making process; 2) deepen our understanding of gender-responsive arms control; and, 3) advance the full and effective implementation of gender-responsive arms control measures.

So, first, the issue of inclusivity in decision making. It is encouraging nowadays to hear in all disarmament and arms control fora at least the acknowledgement that women are powerful agents for peace and vital contributors to all arms control objectives. The sad reality is that women remain chronically underrepresented in all those fora.

The proportion of women participating in arms control initiatives has grown steadily over the last four decades. But progress in 2018 still only means that 34% of all delegates to the First Committee are women. And at last year's Fourth Conference of State Parties to the ATT, the percentage was 27%.<sup>1</sup>

In his Agenda for Disarmament, the UN Secretary-General recognizes that the continued under-representation of women in disarmament and arms control discussions is a

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<sup>1</sup> [UNIDIR study](#)

loss for all of us, not just for women. Thus, he is committed to achieving gender parity, which means 50/50 on all panels, boards, expert groups and other bodies established under his auspices.

For example, the recently concluded group of governmental experts, GGE, on the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) made some gains in increasing the meaningful participation of women with an unprecedented 42% of women experts. The GGE on UNROCA was chaired by a very competent woman - Ms. Mariela Fogante of Argentina. Let me also mention the nomination of excellent women experts to the GGE on cybersecurity that we have just launched.

And yet, we must go further.

The UN Secretary-General has committed himself to achieving gender parity at the group of governmental experts on ammunition, which will convene next year. Without prejudice to equitable geographical balance and the necessary expertise in the subject matter, of course, States wishing to participate in that GGE have a greater chance of being selected when they nominate competent women experts who can actually make contributions on this subject.

I would also like to invite all Member States of the UN when they are drafting, sponsoring and negotiating resolutions that establish those bodies, GGEs etcetera, to ensure that those resolutions include gender balance as an important selection criterion, in addition to all the other traditional criteria. So, this is a call and a request from me, looking at the First Committee on the horizon.

Such commitments can act as powerful drivers for complete change – as long as they are also accompanied by other indicators. Let's be frank. We need both representation and participation. While we should look at numbers and of course aim for parity in representation, we also need men and women to participate equally on substance as well. To date, women are severely underrepresented in leadership positions within delegations and also have fewer opportunities to speak during the meetings. They are seldom the head of the delegation and only 27% of all statements during last year's First Committee were delivered by women.

We have a moral obligation to ensure there is equality in numbers and also substantive contributions, and we know that we can, women can, contribute to all these discussions. We also need inclusive and equitable environments to ensure that we account for

all voices and perspectives in our decision-making processes. So, let's look at the inclusiveness of decision-making processes both in terms of numbers but also in terms of substance.

Now, my second point, in addition to representation and participation, we must also look at how we approach gender-responsive arms control.

Gender perspectives are now mainstreamed in nearly all arms control discussions, reports, and negotiated outcome documents – at least at the international level. For example, across General Assembly resolutions there has been a concerted effort to ensure gender mainstreaming in all disarmament and arms control subjects – and this includes subjects from small arms and light weapons, to improvised explosive devices, to nuclear weapons.

I am very pleased to say that we are heading in the right direction. But we need to make sure that our understanding also continues to evolve regarding the way gender roles can shape arms control and disarmament policies and practices. Our grasp of the differentiated impacts of weapons on women and men or the gendered aspects of ownership, use and misuse of small arms must indeed get much better.

If we want to make more progress, there are other key areas that we will need to put concerted efforts towards, such as understanding and agreeing on definitions; collecting disaggregated data; and undertaking gender analyses.

It has already been mentioned that there is not yet a common understanding of what constitutes gender-based violence. We need to gain a more detailed understanding of terminologies and their definitions and how they apply to our work. That is why the thematic focus of this Conference is so important – it provides a platform for learning, understanding and sharing of the concept of gender and gender-based violence.

We are often most familiar with the notion of sexual and physical violence against women. But the definition of gender-based violence incorporates boys and girls, elderly persons, men and persons with non-traditional sexualities and gender identities. And it also extends to verbal, psychological and socioeconomic violence as well. Whenever a gun or other types of conventional weapons are used in any of those contexts, it does become relevant to Arms Trade Treaty. So, this is a dimension that we need to further reflect on.

Other key elements to fostering a deeper understanding of the linkages and patterns between gender and arms are the availability of sex- and age-disaggregated data and gender

analyses. It is fair to say that disaggregated data remains a challenge in arms control, while we have yet to fully commit ourselves to consistently undertaking gender analyses.

Arms control data disaggregated by sex and age helps us in understanding the gender-specific impacts of arms misuse and in designing evidence-based, gender-responsive initiatives to address them, and this is very important. The first step is an assessment of how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant to the possession and use of arms and ultimately, for the arms trade.

Agreed definitions, quantitative data and qualitative analysis can provide a solid foundation for developing indicators for arms export risk assessments, and for relevant policies and legislation in which gender perspectives are a central element to all decision-making and implementation processes. This is something crucial, if we are to really make concrete changes in this area.

Now, let me touch briefly upon my third point, which is implementation.

The ATT is an excellent vehicle for addressing gender-based violence as part of a broader prevention strategy.

Still, the most progressive treaty provisions are only as good as their level of implementation. States must commit themselves to follow through on the full and effective implementation of the instruments and resolutions they are party to.

The inclusion of article 7.4 in the Arms Trade Treaty had the positive effect that it has put arms control on the radar of other agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

When agendas converge, it allows us to work together, to bundle our expertise and to develop a streamlined and comprehensive approach towards our common goals.

The SDGs include targets on ending all forms of violence against women and girls, and on significantly reducing illicit arms trade and flows. The national data collected under the SDG process and those targets can serve as a valuable source of information in the ATT context. So, there is convergence.

Also, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is increasingly looking at the relevance of arms control for attaining its objectives. My office is actively supporting those efforts through a number of initiatives, including a multi-year project in support of gender

mainstreaming small arms control that we have recently launched with generous financial support from the European Union.

WPS focal points and gender advisors can support arms control experts and policy makers in understanding the nuances in terminologies and definitions which often underpin gender-discussions. Many years ago, I worked with gender advisers in the context of peacekeeping operations, and I know what kind of expertise they can provide to the overall peace and security platforms.

They can, for example, assist with the collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data. They can provide guidance on how to design gender-responsive indicators and policy frameworks. They can be excellent resource-persons for developing risk-assessment criteria on gender-based violence. They can assist with developing tailored and gender-responsive arms-control trainings for arms expert licencing officers as well.

WPS focal points and gender advisors will also be your allies for more equal gender representation and participation. I urge countries that have not yet appointed national WPS focal points to do so without delay in order to benefit from the expertise they offer.

In addition, let's not forget the latest resolution of the Human Rights Council on the "Impact of arms transfers on human rights", adopted in July.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, it acknowledges that the unregulated transfers of arms can have a direct and/or indirect effect on women and girls, particularly as victims of gender-based violence. The resolution requests the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on the impact of such transfers on the rights of women and girls. I look forward to this report providing solid food-for-thought on this very important, critical linkage.

Let me close with one final remark. This week, everyone in this room has the opportunity to propel us further forward on the arms control as well as on the gender-equality agenda. You have proven that a bold vision is possible when you set the Arms Trade Treaty in motion. I am optimistic that you can do it again this week and I wish you well in your deliberations. I will be following very, very closely, because this is a very important personal issue for myself as well.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

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<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/RES/41/20.