

Caribbean Perspective: Sustainable Development and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

**October 2-3, 2008
Verandah Resort and Spa Hotel
St John's, Antigua and Barbuda**

Conference Outcome Document

Representatives from regional governments and civil society met in Antigua to discuss the relationship between international arms transfers, development and an Arms Trade Treaty. The aims of the conference were:

- 1 To discuss the impact that armed violence has on Caribbean development and to focus on the role that irresponsible arms transfers play in fuelling armed violence.
- 2 To examine the ways in which an Arms Trade Treaty would help to address the problem of irresponsible transfers and contribute to peace and socio-economic development in the Caribbean.
- 3 To examine the role of both exporting and importing States in preventing irresponsible transfers.
- 4 To identify ways in which governments and civil society can work together to support an Arms Trade Treaty

This conference followed similar meetings held in India and Kenya. The Caribbean meeting has identified the following principles which should provide the foundation of an ATT:

- State sovereignty and the right to self-defence
- State commitment to human security
- Transparency and accountability
- Good governance
- Zero tolerance of corruption
- Respect for existing international legal obligations
- Respect for international human rights and humanitarian law
- Promoting sustainable development and the eradication of poverty
- Promoting gender sensitive approaches to public policy and programming
- Controlling civilian possession of small arms and ammunition
- State commitment to the doctrine of minimum force in internal security situations

A global Arms Trade Treaty that serves the Caribbean

During two days of discussions participants and experts shared examples and case studies on the impact of weapons transfers on security and development in the Caribbean. The meeting noted that the costs of armed violence fuelled by irresponsible arms transfers can be seen not just in the many people killed or injured by arms, but also in the challenges countries face in meeting their development goals.

The discussions centred on the social and economic impact which armed violence is having on individual countries and on the region as a whole noting the challenges to community safety; marginalisation of communities; the emerging culture of violence; the demise of young males particularly in urban communities; increasing homicides among children; increased demands on

social services such as hospital care and housing; attacks on women; and the rising cost of personal security.

The meeting noted the economic impact of armed violence in economies that are reliant on tourism and foreign direct investment which form the basis of their social programming.

The meeting also noted that the increase in allocations to State security can negatively impact the State's ability to meet its long term development goals, the Millenium Development Goals and provide for the basic needs of citizens, a situation which could lead to further delinquency and political instability.

The meeting analysed the link between sustainable development and the arms trade treaty noting that the escalation of organised crime and the sophistication of their weaponry are placing a higher demand on the State to invest in equipment and personnel to respond to the risks to State security.

Participants discussed how the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) combined with stereotypical gender socialisation; ways in which masculinity is constructed; and learnt forms of femininity have nurtured violence at the inter-personal, community and national levels. Participants noted the importance of ongoing gender analysis to an effective Arms Trade Treaty.

The meeting noted that Caribbean governments have stated their support for an ATT within the UN system and the importance of civil society partnership with governments to remain engaged in the discussions on an ATT at the international level.

Participants discussed the responsibilities of exporter and importer states in preventing irresponsible transfers of arms and ammunition which have a negative impact in the Caribbean, and the ways in which an ATT could provide a real opportunity to prevent international arms transfers that fuel armed violence, poverty and human rights abuses.

Participants also discussed the issue of corruption and accountability in arms procurement and stockpile management, as well as the 'opportunity costs' of spending limited resources on weapons rather than on more socially productive expenditure, such as education, healthcare, hospitals, training and other social services.

Participants recognised the importance of the participation of civil society in all negotiations of an ATT.

Participants recognised the importance of existing regional agreements and initiatives on arms control including, *inter alia* the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other related materials (CIFTA); the La Antigua Declaration, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). These agreements already contain many of the key elements that could inform a global ATT and provide the foundation blocs of a CARICOM arms trade agreement.

Conclusions

The conference agreed on a set of recommendations that would be transmitted to the Heads of Government of CARICOM. The conference noted that the Government of Antigua and Barbuda as the host government and also the Chair of CARICOM should be requested to forward the

recommendations to Member States for immediate action at the First Committee of the General Assembly at its 63rd session in October 2008.

Such action will consist of a statement by a selected CARICOM Member State referencing the recommendations of this meeting for inclusion in the minutes of the meeting of the First Committee.

Additionally, the recommendations will be forwarded to the Ministers of National Security for discussion and adoption at the next meeting of CARICOM Ministers of National Security and Justice.

In underlining the importance that an ATT would have for the Caribbean's security and development, participants agreed that:

- 1 Greater efforts should be made to prevent the irresponsible transfer of weapons.
- 2 All governments should agree on a set of common standards for arms transfers with respect to procurement, stockpile management, tracing and monitoring.
- 3 An effective ATT should ensure that whenever governments consider authorising a transfer of weapons, they consider the likelihood that those weapons could be used to commit serious violations of international human rights law or international humanitarian law or that they could undermine regional security and development. If a clear risk is identified, authorisation of the weapons transfer should be denied.
- 4 An ATT would offer States the opportunity to ensure that arms transfers reinforce rather than weaken human security.
- 5 Sources of funding for the implementation of the ATT should be identified to build capacity in governments and civil society organisations.
- 6 A public awareness campaign should be developed to promote the link between sustainable development and the ATT.
- 7 CARICOM governments should develop an arms trade agreement.
- 8 Donor countries should be encouraged to provide assistance for governments to invest in programmes that foster lasting social and economic justice in communities with high levels of violence.
- 9 Governments should prioritise inter-regional collaboration in the area of capacity building.

Elements of an ATT

The conference further recommended:

- 1 That negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty should commence within the United Nations as soon as possible and no later than 2010.
- 2 That these negotiations should lead to the agreement of an effective Arms Trade Treaty that would promote human security and development in the Caribbean.
- 3 That an ATT should include universally applicable criteria based on States' existing obligations under international law including international human rights law and international humanitarian law and should require governments to prevent arms transfers where there is a clear likelihood that they may be used to commit serious violations of international human rights law or international humanitarian law, or to undermine peace, security and socio-economic and cultural development.
- 4 That an ATT should take fully into account the recipient's record of compliance with its commitments in the areas of non-proliferation, arms and munitions control and disarmament.
- 5 That an ATT should also take into account the recipient's capacity to ensure the integrity

- and security of the arms received.
- 6 That an ATT should draw from existing instruments, including those in the Caribbean that aim to regulate arms transfers.
 - 7 That an ATT should include as a criterion for arms transfers the risk of diversion to unauthorised persons including non-state actors or possible use for harmful purposes. In this regard, end-users and/or end-use assurances should play an important role. An ATT should include sanctions for continued end-user violations.
 - 8 That an ATT should have a broad scope, encompassing all conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, components of weapons, dual-use equipment and equipment with a military end-use, and arms production equipment and technology. The scope should further include landmines and other conventional weapons already covered by international weapon-specific agreements, and technical support and operational training for the use of the above items.
 - 9 That an ATT should encompass all transfers of weapons including imports, exports, re-exports, transit and transshipment, brokering and related activities, licenses or agreements for foreign arms production, gifts, loans and leasing, government-to-government transfers, and those between their agents and the 'transfer of title' of any items.
 - 10 That, in order to ensure effective monitoring and verification of arms transfers, the following should be in the provisions of an ATT:
 - Regular annual reporting on transfers by states to a UN registry
 - Transparency through, *inter alia*, regular reporting of states to the UN register
 - The importance of transparency at the national level
 - Greater focus on the exchange of information by law-enforcement agencies
 - Dedicated institutional capacity at national level to ensure the fulfilment of substantive reporting and information exchange provisions under an ATT
 - 11 That an ATT should include provisions for international co-operation and assistance in order to ensure that developing states acquire the capacity to implement the provisions of an ATT at the national level. This could include both financial and technical assistance for such states in the establishment, implementation and enforcement of national control systems.
 - 12 That an ATT should establish a dedicated fund to facilitate capacity building for States and civil society organisations for the effective implementation of an ATT.
 - 13 That collaboration between government and civil society in research, data management and analysis in support of an ATT

Participants expressed their appreciation to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for endorsing the meeting and to civil society partners for hosting the conference.

October 3, 2008