

Elements to be discussed in the context of a potential ATT

Introductory remarks by the delegation of the Russian Federation

The First Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2012 UN Conference on ATT
(New York, July 12-23, 2010)

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Dear colleagues,

We greatly value the constructive character of the dialogue on the ATT-related issues that has been going on in the UN for several years. By joint efforts, during this time we have managed to achieve certain results, create bases for our future work. Taking into account the complicated and multifaceted character of arms-related problems the international community is facing we consider it a great deal.

This positive background contrasts with recurrent attempts to divide the participants of our collective process into ATT supporters and so-called skeptics. We do not think it is justified. As a matter of fact we all here are like-minded partners and differ only on what is to be considered a truly effective and feasible document and what is the best way to achieve agreed solutions.

All of us are united in our determination to combat the threat posed by arms in the hands of illegal armed groups, terrorists, extremists and organized crime. It is no secret that most weapons come to wrong hands from illicit trade. The issue is real and serious and requires an adequate collective response by the international community.

The Russian delegation on its part is interested in achieving, as a result of our joint work, a truly robust and efficient document with clear goals, objectives and parameters, based on the highest international standards.

We consider that the primary goal of a possible document should be “countering arms diversion to illicit circulation”. Such a goal is understandable and relevant for all the nations, and its chances for consensual support are truly high.

As for the objectives, they should be focused on blocking channels through which arms get into illicit circulation. Certainly, our common effort should be first based on defining those “weak links” within legal arms trade where real risks of diversion to “black” markets exist. They are generally known (manufacturing arms without licenses, unauthorized re-export, lack of end-user controls and controls of brokering activities, transfers to non-state actors etc.).

I would also like to make it clear what Russia considers to be high international standards. First of all, these are the following:

- Guaranteeing the state monopoly on technical military co-operation with foreign States, as well as the practice of making decisions on arms transfers at the highest political level;
- Exclusively intergovernmental character of relations in the field of technical military co-operation, carried out by Government or entities authorized by them;
- Obligatory character of licensing and legal regulation of all arms-related activities including brokering, efficient controls of brokers and their strict accountability to the State. You know that the Russian legislation stipulates the principle of a single governmental intermediary through which arms and military equipment are exported and imported.

Ban on arms re-export without explicit prior approval by initial exporter, on transfers to non-State actors, on manufacturing arms without licenses or with expired licenses and selling them would also contribute to blocking the channels through which arms leak into illicit circulation. It would also be very useful to introduce clear obligations of States on end-use controls of arms exported.

These measures should be stipulated both in a potential ATT itself and, through its implementation, in respective national legislations and practices of the countries where it has yet to be done. Detailing of such measures should, without any doubt, remain a national prerogative, while a potential ATT should provide a general framework and outline taking into account existing best practices.

There is one more substantial aspect of the discussion on the elements of an ATT. It is within our common interests to control arms closely during all stages of their life-cycle – from their development and manufacturing to disposal. The reports of the regional seminars on an ATT held by the European Union and UNIDIR in 2009-2010 confirm the urgency of raising the issue. We share this opinion and consider that the responsibility for controlling arms circulation should lie on the Governments of States, in whose territories the arms currently are. Countries – both exporters and importers– must do their best within their respective jurisdictions to prevent arms leaks to illegal circulation.

We consider the elements mentioned to be the crucially important for a final document to be functional and efficient, even though they are not exhaustive. It is necessary to specify scope and parameters, regarding which there is a wide range of opinions, as well as terms and definitions, etc. Many other aspects of a potential document have not been clarified yet, including the question of its feasibility.

Given all that, we believe it premature to speak now of a legally binding ATT. The status of a final document, as it seems, should be defined by its content.

I want to stress once again that a weak though universal document would not meet our expectations, since it would "legalize" standards lower than those that are already applied in Russia and most other leading arms-exporting countries.

We think that it is necessary to take into account the findings of the Group of Governmental Experts' report. Even though this document did not fully reflect all the proposals of the members of the Group, including Russia, it can be considered as a balanced compromise base for further discussions.

In conclusion I would like confirm that Russian delegation is looking forward to a constructive and interested discussion. We also believe that active participation of the highest possible number of States in our deliberations is key to its success. In the end only an arrangement based on a wide international consensus confirmed by the authority of the United Nations can be truly viable.