

Beijing seminar looks at the next steps of the Arms Trade Treaty process

Beijing, 16 May 2013

On 16 May, Saferworld and the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association held a day-long seminar in Beijing on The Next Steps of the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The seminar, which was held under the aegis of the Africa-China-EU Expert Working Group (EWG) on Conventional Arms Control, was attended by 65 participants from various backgrounds, including members of the Africa-China-EU EWG, Chinese think tanks and scholars, government and military officials, representatives of the Chinese defence industry, officials from European Union (EU) Member States and Africa, as well as Chinese diplomats and Beijing-based foreign diplomats, including from the EU Delegation. The seminar included keynote speeches and commentaries by leading figures and senior experts in conventional arms controls; four individual sessions were followed by question-and-answer periods.

Following the adoption of the ATT at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 2 April 2013, the main objective of the seminar was to exchange views on the work of the UN ATT diplomatic conferences and the outcome of the UNGA vote, with issues related to signature, ratification, and implementation of the ATT serving as focal points of discussion. The meeting also aimed to clarify the implications of China's abstention at the UNGA vote and how China intended to remain engaged in the ATT process.

A historic start

The seminar participants emphasised the historic achievement of the adoption of the ATT by a huge majority of 155 votes in favour, 3 against, and 22 abstentions. The treaty, which requires States to abide by a set of high common standards for the transfer in conventional arms, can make a significant difference in better regulating the global arms trade and in reducing the human suffering caused by the unregulated, or poorly regulated, arms trade. However, it was noted that the success of the ATT will depend on the treaty being signed and ratified and then robustly implemented and improved through amendments in the years to come. Because of this,

agreeing the treaty is not the end of the initiative, but the start of a new chapter in what will be a long-term process.

China's role

It was noted that despite its abstention at the final vote, China played a constructive role in the run up to and during the ATT diplomatic conferences in July 2012 and March 2013. China's abstention at the UNGA was based on procedural issues rather than the substance of the treaty text, i.e. the decision being taken by vote in the UNGA rather than agreed by consensus at the diplomatic conference. In this regard, China did not want to support the precedent of this type of treaty being agreed by majority vote, given the potential implications that this could have for future arms-related negotiations. Participants were informed that China is currently undertaking an internal inter-agency process of analysis of the treaty text that will determine its future position, including possible signature, vis-à-vis the ATT.

Regarding the next steps for the ATT, it was noted that there are calls from the EU and the African Union for early signature and ratification, thus building on the current momentum. Indeed, a large number of European and African countries are working towards signing the ATT as soon as the treaty opens for official signature on 3 June 2013. Clear and proactive support from the United States (US) for the signature of the treaty was also noted: in a very welcome development, on 15 May 2013 Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Countryman confirmed that the US government would sign the treaty "in the very near future".¹

Implementation challenges

In terms of the implementation prospects of the treaty, the seminar delivered a sense of the challenges this will involve. One of the most significant challenges is that not all UN Member States will have the same

¹ For more on this see *Foreign Policy* (2013), "[United States will sign arms trade treaty](#)" 15 May.

resources and capacity to implement the treaty in the most effective way. However, it was emphasised that there are important provisions in the treaty covering international cooperation and assistance that promote convergence between countries requiring assistance and those in a position to deliver it. For example, there are countries that have already committed to contribute resources to a voluntary trust fund that will assist States Parties requiring international assistance. Moreover, some countries have resources earmarked for humanitarian and development assistance that may also be available to support ATT implementation.

Fostering dialogue

The seminar proved successful in meeting its goals and in fostering a genuinely open and far-reaching dialogue among a broad spectrum of experts. Numerous participants reported having improved their knowledge about the future steps of the ATT initiative and China's position as a result of the presentations and discussions that were held at the seminar. The presentations and the lively and engaging discussions during the Q&A sessions revealed the participants' great interest in what comes next with the ATT process as a whole, and highlighted the importance of continued international-level dialogue on the ratification and effective implementation of the ATT.

The ATT seminar was preceded on 15 May 2013 by the third meeting of the Africa-China-EU EWG on conventional arms, where the group discussed current and planned activities and shared perspectives with Chinese scholars and think tank experts on how China can support initiatives aimed at preventing the illegal trade and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons in Africa.

For more information on the seminar, please contact Bernardo Mariani, Saferworld's China Programme Head, at: bmariani@saferworld.org.uk

CONFIRMED PARTICIPANTS – Speakers are listed in bold font

Åberg Somogyi, Martina - Second Secretary, Embassy of Sweden, Beijing

Brig Alam, Mujahid - National University of Science & Technology, Pakistan

Ayii, Jamal - Counsellor, Embassy of South Sudan, Beijing

Amb Adala, Ochieng – Acting Executive Director, Africa Peace Forum, Kenya

Amb Beijer, Paul - Department for Disarmament and Non-proliferation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Bodin, Martin - Defence Attaché, Embassy of Sweden, Beijing

Dr Cao, Hui - Assistant Research Fellow, Institute for European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)

Col Cholley, Serge - Defence Attaché, Embassy of France, Beijing

Desgange, Richard - Regional Legal Advisor, Regional Delegation for East Asia, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Dr Duchâtel, Mathieu - Senior Researcher and Head, China and International Peace and Security Project, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Flens, William - First Secretary, Embassy of the United States of America, Beijing

Brig Gen Gborglah, Bennet K. - Defence Attaché, Embassy of Ghana, Beijing

Gogu Saame, Alfred - Minister, Embassy of Ghana, Beijing

Gong, Yaqiao - Official, Ministry of National Defence, China

Gramizzi, Claudio - Weapons and Conflict Analyst, Italy

Dr Guo, Xiaobing - China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), China

Dr Guo, Yang - Legal Advisor, Regional Delegation for East Asia, ICRC

Han, Bingbing - Expert, State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (SASTIND)

Prof Han, Hua - Director, Center for Arms Control and Disarmament, Peking University

Holton, Daniel - First Secretary, Embassy of Canada, Beijing

Houlsby, Matthew – Second Secretary, Embassy of the United Kingdom, Beijing

Hu, Yumin - China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS)

Idoko, Fidelis E. - Minister, Embassy of Nigeria, Beijing

Isbister, Roy - Head of Small Arms and Transfer Controls programme, Saferworld

Prof Leng, Xinyu - China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL)

Amb Li, Changhe - Senior Advisor, China Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA)

Li, Hong - Vice-president & Secretary General, CACDA

Li, Rui - Counsellor, ICP Office, China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation (CATIC)

Li, Shuai - Assistant General Manager, Marketing Management Department, China North Industries Corporations (NORINCO)

Li, Yuanshu - Senior Programme Manager, ICP Office, CATIC

Prof Li, Weihai - China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL)

Li, Weiwei - Associate Research Fellow, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)

Liu, Jin - ICP Office, Poly Technologies, Inc.

Maj Gen Lual, Daniel Deng - South Sudan

Luo, Jin - Deputy Managing Director, ICP Office, CATIC

Mariani, Bernardo - Head of China Programme, Saferworld

Nabudere, Richard - Small Arms and Light Weapons Consultant, Uganda

Ndung'u, James - Kenya Project Manager, Arms Control and Policing, Saferworld

Prof Ouyang, Liping - China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, China

Gen Palmieri, Angelo - Defence Attaché, Embassy of Italy, Beijing

Maj Gen Pan, Zhenqiang - China Foundation for International Studies and Academic Exchanges (CFISAE)

Pavageau, Myriam - First Secretary, Embassy of France, Beijing

Col Saidou, Ba - Defence Attaché, Embassy of Senegal, Beijing

Salim, Salim M. - Senior Assistant Director, Multilateral Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya

Shen, Liwei - Internal Control Programme Management, ICP Office, NORINCO

Shi Ying - Expert, Ministry of National Defence, China

Simonet, Loic – Advisor, Former Politico-Military Counsellor, Permanent Representation of France to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Brig Souleymane, Cisse - Defence Attaché, Embassy of Mali, Beijing

Tang, Xiaomin - Project Officer, China Programme, Saferworld

Tomlinson, Andrew - Director, Quaker United Nations Office, New York

Van Vuuren, Rianne - Political Advisor, Embassy of South Africa, Beijing

Vraila, Marina - First Counsellor, Political Affairs, Delegation of the European Union, Beijing

Dr Vranckx, An - Small Arms and Conflict Advisor, Belgium

Wierenga, Dirk Jan - Deputy Head, Political Department, Embassy of the Netherlands, Beijing

Wang, Jia - CACDA

Wang, Yu - State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND)

Wu, Jinhui - CACDA

Prof Xia, Liping – Dean of School of Political Science, Tongji University, Shanghai

Xiao, Yue - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China

Xie, Yanmei - China Analyst, International Crisis Group (ICG)

Xu, Yimin - Expert, CACDA

Yang, Yiyi - American Friends Service Committee

Yin, Haigang - Deputy Division Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China

Yiqiang, Liu - Chinese Initiative on International Criminal Justice

Zhai, Dequan - Deputy Secretary General, China Arms Control and Disarmament Association (CACDA), China

Zhou, Jianhua - Managing Director, ICP Office, CATIC

Zhu, Fagen - Deputy Division Director, Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament (CPAPD)

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.

Saferworld – 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT, UK
Registered Charity no 1043843
Company limited by guarantee no 3015948
Tel: +44 (0)20 7324 4646 | Fax: +44 (0)20 7324 4647
Email: general@saferworld.org.uk
Web: www.saferworld.org.uk