

Fifth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty
Geneva, 26-30 August 2019

Opening session

Address by Andris Pelšs

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Mr. President of the Fifth Conference of States Parties, Ladies and Gentlemen, Excellencies, (State President),

At the outset, on behalf of the Latvian Government, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the States Parties of the Arms Trade Treaty for supporting Latvia's candidacy to be the first Arms Trade Treaty president from the Eastern European regional group. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the cooperation and support States and stakeholders of this conference, including civil society and industry, have extended to Latvia.

These days in Latvia everyone likes number 100. Last November Latvia celebrated its 100th anniversary of statehood. Last December – 100th State Party to ATT was achieved under Latvian presidency. In two weeks time we will celebrate 100 years since establishment of Latvian Diplomatic service.

Latvia took up the role of the president of the Arms Trade Treaty as part of our strong support and contribution to strengthening the global peace and non-proliferation regime. After two years as vice-chairs of the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors and just recently chairing the Nuclear Suppliers Group, my government is strongly committed to continue Latvia's contribution to the rules based international order.

Latvia attaches a great significance towards being a trustful and cooperative member of export control regimes. Besides finishing its NSG chairmanship two months ago, Latvia is chairing the Wassenaar Arrangement Experts Group for 2019-2020.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, the Bureau and the Management Committee for all the efforts in organizing this Fifth Conference of States Parties. I would like to thank the head of the Secretariat Mr. Dumisani Dladla and his team for tireless efforts in securing all activities under the Arms Trade Treaty.

Mr. President,

Latvia ratified the Arms Trade Treaty on 2 April 2014 thus contributing to the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty at the end of 2014. Successful implementation of

the Treaty at the national level has always been a priority of the Latvian government. Today we are prepared and willing to share our experience and best practices in order to assist other countries on their way to develop effective and internationally recognized export control of arms.

Export control issues are part of my daily agenda as I am chairing the Export Control Committee of Latvia – the cross-institutional body comprising all agencies involved in the export control in Latvia. Therefore, I am fully aware of importance of international cooperation in furthering efficiency of export control procedures both domestically and internationally.

The inter-connected nature of the arms trade means that no state is left untouched by this trade. So a global situation needs a global mechanism to control it. By joining the ATT, states join a regime committed to creating the highest possible standards, and reducing the negative impact of unregulated arms flows. We are very pleased that during Latvian presidency the number of ATT States parties has increased to 104.

We welcome new states joining the Arms Trade Treaty since the last Conference of State Parties, namely Suriname, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Palau, Lebanon, Botswana and Canada. Congratulations to all. We are also pleased of the diverse geographic distribution of the new States Parties that underlines the significance that all regions of the world attach to the ATT.

Mr. President,

I am delighted that all the ATT states parties supported our presidency priority – gender and gender based violence in relation to the ATT. I hope that the President's draft decision will enjoy consensual support of all States Parties and will become the first intergovernmental agreement on practical steps that each government can make in this respect within the framework of ATT. Latvia attaches a great significance to gender issues.

I would like to thank our partner "Control Arms" in promoting Latvian presidency priority theme. Together we organized a seminar in Latvian capital Rīga for Central and Eastern Europe experts, on ATT and gender based violence. I invite interested delegates to attend a side event on Wednesday where we will present the outcome of the seminar.

At the end of the opening session there will be the high level panel discussion on gender and gender based violence featuring eminent speakers including former President of Latvia Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga who was the first female Head of State in the Central and Eastern Europe.

Mr. President,

Unregulated and irresponsible arms transfers intensify and prolong conflict, lead to regional instability, facilitate human rights abuses on a large scale, and undermine social and economic development. At the first CSP, the ICRC reminded us that a gap exists between the duty to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in arms transfers, and the actual transfer practices of too many States. I hope that at this CSP we will focus on closing this gap, and making the important aims of the Treaty to reduce human suffering a reality.

Latvia continues to be concerned with the number of outstanding national assessed financial contributions. The effectiveness of the Treaty depends on the availability of resources to carry out its mandated activities. Non-payment or delayed payment of contributions seriously hamper normal functioning of not only the Secretariat but also the treaty as a whole. Such a situation is not acceptable. Latvia calls on all States Parties to fulfil their obligations towards ATT and pay assessed contributions in time and in full. Latvia supports proposals formulated by the Management Committee on financial issues.

Mr. President,

In concluding, Mr. President, let me wish all successful deliberations. I also would like to express my strong belief that Argentina as the ATT president – designate by GRULAC will continue working towards achieving goals and objectives of the Arms Trade Treaty. We should always strive to protect and strengthen this international regime if we want to be successful in our common efforts of preventing illegal transfer and trade of arms and ultimately diminishing human suffering in different parts the world.

Thank you!