



EUROPEAN UNION



UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE
FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH

**Supporting the Arms Trade Treaty Negotiations
through Regional Discussions and Expertise Sharing**

Launch of the EU–UNIDIR Project

**15 July 2010
New York, USA**

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

On 14 June 2010, the Council of the European Union adopted Council Decision 2010/336/CFSP on “EU activities in support of the Arms Trade Treaty, in the framework of the European Security Strategy”. This decision established a follow-on project consisting of a series of regional events, following a previous successful series of regional seminars organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in 2009–2010. The new project was launched at UN Headquarters in New York, in the margins of the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 15 July 2010. It brought together close to 100 participants from UN Member States, international organizations and civil society.

The objective of the launch was to present the project, to be implemented by UNIDIR for the European Union during a period of 24 months (July 2010–July 2011). The project launch aimed at ensuring that all target groups became well informed, encouraging their wide and active participation, and seeking input from UN Member States, civil society, researchers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to secure support for the project’s implementation. The launch and the project plan attracted wide interest throughout the target audience and were very well received.

Project outline

The project was designed following feedback received from participants and other stakeholders of the previous EU–UNIDIR project, in which continued, inclusive, regional-level dialogue was called for, together with further in-depth research and a widened participation-base to support the ATT process. Many participants also stressed the need to move toward concrete training and capacity-building projects, in parallel with diplomatic negotiations. Hence, the new phase was developed with two main objectives: first, to support the preparatory process leading up to the UN Conference on an ATT to ensure that it is as inclusive as possible and able to make concrete recommendations on the elements of the future ATT; and second, to support UN Member States in developing and improving national and regional expertise to implement effective arms transfer controls, in order to ensure that the future ATT, when coming into force, will be as effective as possible.

The project will consist of seven regional seminars together with support activities, such as side events in the margins of the Preparatory Committee meetings. The regional seminars will be three-day events, consisting of two parts. The first part will provide a general overview of an ATT and the current stage in the process, while the second part will be more oriented toward practice and capacity-building.

Two participants from each targeted state will be invited to participate: one participant representing diplomatic personnel responsible for national policies vis-à-vis an ATT, including national delegates participating in the ATT Preparatory Committee; and one from agencies working in export controls, customs or law enforcement as they relate to an ATT. In addition, representatives from international and regional organizations, regionally based NGOs and defence industry will be invited to participate, together with technical experts on aspects of export controls on conventional arms, including EU experts.

To ensure a well informed, substantive and timely input to the UN process, up to 12 background papers will be commissioned from research institutes or individual experts to focus on elements of the future ATT and the UN process. The research paper will also serve as a background for relevant discussions in the regional seminars.

United Nations and an ATT

The remarks that Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament, made at the event concentrated on the United Nations' approach towards an ATT and highlighted the advantages of regional approaches as contributors to higher trust levels and further exchanges of views. According to the United Nations, an effective ATT will benefit from strong regional input and, vice versa, regions will benefit from an effective ATT. Duarte highlighted three aspects of regional-level action: first, regional organizations offer a shared, common and agreed platform for discussion, and the catalytic effect of a regionally agreed standpoint can be considerable once transposed into a multilateral setting. Second, there may be merit in further engaging parliamentarians of a region, as concerned stakeholders, in discussions on an ATT, especially as they eventually would have to agree to the ratification of such a treaty. Third, regional initiatives may very well draw upon the work done by academic institutes and civil society. Research centres with a strong regional focus can contribute significantly to the debate. According to the United Nations it is also important to involve civil society organizations at the regional level, given their far-reaching local networks and accumulated expertise.

European Union and an ATT

In her remarks, Ms. Annalisa Giannella, the EU Representative on Non-proliferation and Disarmament, confirmed the European Union's commitment to the development of a legally binding ATT that will regulate the international trade in conventional arms and be based on the highest-possible common international standards. The European Union sees inclusiveness in the process leading towards the establishment of an ATT as crucial, and has supported this through a series of outreach activities. In 2009, the European Union adopted a Council Decision which resulted in the organization by UNIDIR of six regional seminars, covering virtually all UN Member States, where state and regional representatives became acquainted with the various aspects of the future ATT and discussed concerns and national positions in an open and transparent manner. On the eve of the negotiating stage, the European Union decided to redouble its efforts with Council Decision 2010/336/CFSP, adopted on 14 June 2010, on "EU activities in support of the Arms Trade Treaty, in the framework of the European Security Strategy", which will consist of seven regional seminars to be organized between fall 2010 and spring 2012.

ECOWAS and an ATT

Mr. Cyriaque Agnekethom from the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) presented his organization's views on the EU-UNIDIR regional seminars and the ATT process. He commended the seminars as useful fora for increased understanding of participants on the ATT process and for the expression of subregional priorities and concerns. He also noted that the regional events are useful for the exchange of information among the different regions across the continents and for the elaboration of what might or might not be possible and desirable for an ATT. He

called for a careful selection by states of seminar participants, and continued effective collaboration with regional organizations. Finally, Agnekethom noted that the outcomes of the seminars should be carefully considered in the Preparatory Committee process. Existing documents of regional organizations, such as the ECOWAS Convention, could provide valuable input to the negotiating process.

Question and answer session

The presentations were followed by a series of questions and comments from the floor, both relating to specific aspects presented by the speakers and to the ATT process more generally. Points were raised about the importance of continued civil society participation in the project activities, together with strong partnerships with regional organizations in the conduct of the seminars. Regional events were noted as extremely important capacity-building opportunities, providing the possibility for a wider set of relevant officials to become involved in the ATT process, as not all stakeholders have the possibility to participate in the meetings in New York. The continued importance of regional arrangements was stressed, and it was noted that an ATT should under no circumstances put at risk or lower the standards of existing regional instruments, such as the ECOWAS Convention, the Southern African Development Community's Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, and the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Questions about an ATT's added value and links with the EU Common Position were also posed. Participants were also eager to know more about the precise schedule of activities foreseen as part of the project, and many asked to be kept updated about forthcoming project activities.

Results

The launch of the new project was successful and met the goals set for this activity. The level of participation was high: despite the many activities in the margins of the Preparatory Committee meeting, almost 100 people participated in the launch, among them many UN Member State representatives, the Chair of the Preparatory Committee meetings, together with representatives from the leading organizations of the Control Arms Campaign and from regional organizations. From the side of the European Union, the EU Representative on Non-proliferation and Disarmament was present, and the United Nations was represented by the High Representative for Disarmament. The high-level participants and experts contributed to the success of the event. In addition, the UNIDIR team was approached during the event by several interested governmental representatives and experts who wanted to learn more about the project and share their ideas concerning topics for future background research and for the regional seminars.

Holding the launch seminar during the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee was advantageous and helped raise momentum concerning the EU–UNIDIR Project. Presentations made at the launch provided useful background to the project, and also presented the views of the United Nations, the European Union and ECOWAS on an ATT. The discussion that followed revealed participants' great interest in the project and its planned activities, and brought up additional aspects and comments related to the ATT process as a whole. Based on the feedback received from participants, the seminar

was perceived as a stimulating and encouraging launch for the new EU–UNIDIR Project.

Next steps

Following the launch seminar, UNIDIR will now proceed, in accordance with Council Decision 2010/336/CFSP, to commission the background papers stipulated in the Decision, in close cooperation with the services of the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. UNIDIR will also commence the organization of the seven regional seminars, to be held in different parts of the world over the next two years.

In addition to the regional seminars the project foresees the organization of three side-events in the margins of the First Committee sessions and the Preparatory Committee meetings, and a final seminar to present the overall results of the project. Summary reports from each regional seminar outlining discussions, ideas and recommendations put forward for an ATT will be made available online. A final report compiling the summary reports of the regional seminars will be produced and presented for comment at the concluding seminar, and will be made available online once finalized.