STATEMENT

by

Ambassador Paul Beijer
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at the

United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty

United Nations
New York

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
Mr Chairman,

Let me begin by joining others in congratulating you on your appointment as Chairman of this conference, and thanking you for accepting the task of leading our deliberations during this final, crucial phase of our work. You can count on Sweden’s full support for your efforts.

Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier this morning by the European Union, and consequently I will not repeat the points made there.

Mr Chairman,

In June 2007, the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development was signed as an initiative of a number of countries, international organisations and civil society groups. Today, over 100 nations have signed this Declaration. One result of the Geneva Declaration has been a more systematic approach to collecting statistics on armed violence and its consequences.

Thanks to those efforts, we now know that almost three quarters of a million people die every year as a result of armed violence, either armed conflict or armed criminal violence. The number of men, women and children who are not killed, but who are maimed, traumatized, violated or have their future prospects irrevocably altered as a consequence of armed violence is significantly larger.

Armed conflict and armed criminal violence are not only a threat to life itself, they destroy the fabric of society and effectively hinder economic development in many parts of the world. The economic impact of armed violence is almost immeasurable. Merely the productivity losses due to criminal armed violence have been estimated at 100 billion USD per year. To put it differently: the victims of today’s armed violence include future generations, whose economic and social possibilities will be limited to a greater or lesser degree due to the effects of the violence we see today.

Mr Chairman,

This is why we have gathered here in New York to negotiate an Arms Trade Treaty. Fuelling this tide of death and destruction, human suffering and social disintegration, is the unregulated trade in arms. Be it illegal trade or legal trade where the broader consequences of supplying arms have not been adequately taken into account.

We believe that a legally binding, universal instrument aimed at better regulating the legal trade in arms represents an essential step in addressing what can only be described as one of the most serious challenges facing the global community today.

It is by setting up international norms in this area that we most effectively can encourage sovereign states to shoulder their share of the responsibility for avoiding arms transfers that risk having a destabilizing impact on nations and regions, and of increasing the severity of armed conflict and interpersonal armed violence.
Furthermore, we believe that an Arms Trade Treaty that obliges signatories to set up and maintain controls on the trade in military equipment - and to cooperate with each other in enforcing such controls - represents our best chance of effectively addressing the illegal trade and putting the ‘merchants of death’ out of business.

Mr Chairman,

Some have argued that an ATT could provide an excuse for the producers and suppliers of defence equipment to pursue policies of political discrimination against individual nations or groups of nations. In response to this line of reasoning we can only say that such policies need no excuse in the form of an ATT. In fact, an ATT, by setting up generally accepted norms in this area, could be seen as providing some measure of protection against arbitrary decision-making.

Mr Chairman,

We have three quarters of a million reasons per year to set aside national differences and national agendas in order to work together for a period of one month to achieve an effective and universally implementable Arms Trade Treaty.

Let us take that opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.