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**Arms Trade Treaty**

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**Agenda Item 4: Thematic discussion on Interagency Cooperation**

**Thank you, Chair.**

**Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,**

I am honoured to participate in this thematic panel discussing CSP10 President's working paper on interagency cooperation.

Before we proceed, I would like to take a moment to pay my respects and extend my condolences on the passing of our dear colleague Mr. Stefan Ott, the former Finance and Administration Officer at the ATT Secretariat. He was dynamic member of our ATT community here in Geneva. May he rest in peace, and I wish his family, friends, and colleagues' strength during this difficult time.

As we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), we must recognize the continued efforts of States Parties and other stakeholders, including civil society, toward the full and effective

implementation of the Treaty. While we are encouraged by the progress in strengthening and universalizing the ATT, now with [115] States Parties, it is important to acknowledge that there is still much work to be done.

The ATT remains a key instrument within the international security architecture, helping to prevent transfers of conventional arms that could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international law, and to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms. The Treaty is the first and only international agreement that creates legally binding international standards to regulate the international trade in conventional arms, offering a unique platform for cooperation and exchange. It is also the first legally binding multilateral instrument that requires States to consider the risks of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence (GBV).

As you are well aware, weapons legally acquired by States often end up in the hands of unintended forces. Illicit transfers and diversions from official stockpiles have become a significant challenge in regulating conventional arms in many countries, particularly in Africa.

Beyond the direct, devastating consequences caused by the unchecked trade in conventional weapons, the indirect consequences can be equally catastrophic. Countries in conflict or in the aftermath of conflict often have to divert scarce resources, desperately needed for basic public services and infrastructure, to address the fallout from armed violence—such as health costs and military expenditures.

It is for these reasons that, during my presidency of CSP7, I focused on strengthening efforts to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ensuring efficient stockpile management. The proposals contained in my working paper that was unanimously adopted by States Parties aimed to address the illicit trade in SALW and strengthen stockpile management and security.

This brings me to the issue at hand: the importance of interagency cooperation for the effective implementation of ATT provisions. Sierra Leone, as one of the first states to ratify the Treaty and a champion country for reporting and transparency, strongly supports Ambassador Răzvan Rusu's chosen theme on interagency cooperation and support.

Interagency cooperation is crucial for the ATT's success because the regulation of the arms trade involves multiple stakeholders, including national authorities, law enforcement agencies, border control, customs, and civil society. Effective implementation requires seamless coordination among these entities to share information, coordinate actions, and address challenges. It is the reason why Sierra Leone's National Small Arms Commission, which spearheads the implementation of the ATT, is overseen directly by the Office of the President.

In Sierra Leone's experience, establishing clear communication channels between various national agencies is vital for monitoring and controlling arms transfers and preventing their diversion. Engaging civil society has also proven valuable in raising awareness about illicit arms flows.

However, challenges remain. Limited resources and lack of technical expertise sometimes hinder the effective implementation of the Treaty. Therefore, in line with the thematic paper's recommendations, I would like to emphasize the importance of sharing best practices and innovative approaches, as well as building capacity at the national level, as essential steps for strengthening interagency cooperation and treaty implementation.

Incorporating the cross-cutting issue of interagency cooperation into ATT working groups' agendas will also enhance our collective efforts. Furthermore, as highlighted in the working paper, I encourage States to utilize the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) to support efforts aimed at establishing or strengthening interagency cooperation. Sharing experiences and lessons learned from these efforts within the ATT community will provide valuable guidance for others.

Lastly, I echo the sentiment expressed in the thematic paper on the importance of developing and delivering targeted training on interagency cooperation. Such training should recognize that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution and should draw upon the diverse experiences and best practices shared by States Parties.

As we continue to develop concrete steps to strengthen this important Treaty, promoting cooperation, transparency, and responsible action by States Parties in the international trade in conventional arms remains paramount. I urge States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the ATT. In this context, I am pleased to welcome our two fellow African countries, The Gambia and Malawi, to the ATT family. One of the highlights of Sierra Leone's presidency during CSP7 was bringing on board our West African

sister country, The Gambia, to sign the ATT, and it is gratifying to see the accession process completed. Africa now has 31 States Parties and 10 signatory States to the ATT, reflecting the importance of the Treaty to our security and development.

Let me conclude with an emphasis, namely: interagency cooperation is not optional; it is a necessity for the successful implementation of the ATT. By adopting the recommendations proposed in the thematic paper, we can build stronger national and international frameworks capable of addressing the complexities of the global arms trade. As we look ahead, let us continue to build on our shared experiences, foster collaboration, and strengthen the mechanisms that support the ATT's goals. Together, we can work towards a safer, more secure world for all.

I thank you for your attention.