

## **ARMED VIOLENCE IN THE ATT, Report 2<sup>nd</sup> Preparatory Meeting, February-March 2011**

The second preparatory week to the negotiations of an arms trade treaty (ATT) closed on a high in terms of armed violence, with a very strong statement by Mexico on behalf of Bahamas, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, Mexico, Guatemala, Chile, Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica calling for the inclusion of armed violence in paragraph 9 of the principles as well as in other parts of the treaty text, such as the section on goals and objectives.

That intervention and the call from CARICOM countries to recognize the human impact of armed violence and the importance for armed violence and not only armed conflict to be included in the treaty text, skyrocketed the number of countries that publicly mentioned the need to include armed violence in the existing text, from 3 up to 24. (15 CARICOM, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay, Zambia, Norway and Nigeria).

Definitely CARICOM and part of Latin America have been champions not only in supporting armed violence as a concept but in actively and publicly calling for states to include it in several parts of the treaty text.

It has to be said though that at this stage armed violence does not appear in the latest version of the Chairman's Draft Paper and that a lot of effort still needs to be done to ensure that other European, African and Asian countries vocally call for the inclusion of armed violence in the treaty text. Disappointingly, some key core group countries of the Geneva Declaration, failed to raise this issue during debates. There is hope that this will change during the July Preparatory Committee, now that some of the most affected countries in the world have vocally raised it and do not seem prepared to compromise on this.

We have seen this week that states are still debating whether this is a treaty that puts humanitarian concerns at its core or whether it is simply another trade treaty aiming at regulating one specific product: arms! These antagonistic positions have been reflected also in states' reactions to the introduction of victim assistance provisions under the international cooperation section. It is reassuring to see that the revised text put forward by the Chair still contains two specific paragraphs on victim assistance, although the scope of the provisions has been narrowed down to victims of armed conflict instead of victims of armed violence.

NGOs have been loud in calling on states to ensure that armed violence is introduced not only in the principles and scope section but also as a specific criterion, through which states should consider death and injuries of armed violence, for example through the analyses of homicide rates in one country, when assessing a specific arms transfer. This latest point does not seem to have been taken on board by states yet, partly because there is still a lack of clear understanding of how armed violence could concretely be included as a specific criterion and of what that would imply for states in reality.

NGOs have also called on states to put individuals and communities at the centre of their negotiations and to ensure that assistance to all victims of armed violence is included in the treaty. We have heard with consternation though how some states have been vocally opposing any inclusion of victim assistance in the treaty, considering that the ATT is not the right forum to be debating this issue!

Finally, the UK Ambassador John Duncan informed delegates that he'd be leaving his current place as Ambassador for Multilateral Arms Control & Disarmament. In its personal address to the plenary, he said "I hope that the ATT will be a panacea for those suffering from armed violence around the world!" And we hope that the UK, and all the other delegations attending the preparatory committees will keep his words close when negotiating the treaty text.

It was important to ensure that this issue that was considered as secondary has been highlighted by states but also by NGOs that have included amongst their presentations, a specific slot to raise the issue of armed violence and ATT. Though positions amongst NGOs might differ slightly in terms of how AV should practically be included, it is reassuring to see that advocacy and lobbying efforts have been taken on board by states.

### **Who are the key supporters amongst states?**

Norway (said that Prg. 9 of the preamble should not talk only about armed conflict but about armed violence more broadly, and AV should also be included under scope),

Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica (both very champions in calling for its inclusion,

CARICOM as a whole also mentioned armed violence in their intervention,

Zambia (I don't have specific details on how that was mentioned yet.)

Nigeria (They mentioned the regional conference that they are going to organize, no specific reference about ways in which AV can be included in the treaty text though),

México that also spoke for: Jamaica, T&T, Bahamas, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay,

Chile (This last group called specifically for the inclusion of armed violence in paragraph 9 of the principles "Include armed violence next to armed conflict to ensure that ATT really has an impact on it" and also for it to be included in the goals and objectives' section.

Even though lobbying efforts have ensured that AV would be raised during the debate, it is still not mentioned in the text proposed by the chair, so there is a need for supportive NGO organizations to work together in order to line up more states that vocally call for AV inclusion in the principles, in the section on scope and objectives and also as a specific criterion.

At this stage, apart from CARICOM, there is not much vocal support from states to include AV as a specific criterion. This might be due to a lack of concrete understanding on how armed violence might be included as a criterion and how transfer assessments should be done on that base.