

Report on  
People's consultation on the Arms Trade  
Treaty



RWANDA

(2007)

## **BACKGROUND**

Since 2003 the control Arms Campaign has been calling for international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to bring the global arms under control; over a million people around the world have signed the million face petition in support of this goal. The campaign had a huge success last December, when 153 governments voted to begin work on an ATT. To make sure the momentum towards an ATT is maintained, governments and civil society organizations must continue to campaign for a strong and comprehensive treaty.

## **Introduction**

Following the previous people's consultations that took places in different areas of the country, a general consultative meeting on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was convened on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2007 at Castel Hotel in Kigali.

The meeting brought together thirty participants including various civil society organizations, the Rwanda National Focal Point (RNFP) on Small Arms and Light Weapons, various relevant government ministries and ordinary people.

The main objective of the meeting was to collect views of the people on a comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). This was done through group

discussions which gave the participants a brainstorming atmosphere on what an ATT should achieve.

## **Objectives of the meeting**

- ❖ To create awareness on Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).
- ❖ To involve people in the process that impact on their security and human rights.
- ❖ To get views of the people on what an ATT should achieve.
- ❖ To allow people's voices to be incorporated in the National (and ultimately international) political Process.

## **Meeting proceedings**

The opening session started at ten past nine o'clock with opening remarks by the coordinator of SaferRwanda, who started by welcoming participants and also described the programme and objectives of the meeting. Among the official guests in the meeting was the coordinator of RNFP who opened the meeting officially and afterwards presented a paper on ATT.

After the opening ceremony the meeting entered into a session of presentations, thereafter the participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and debate on different issues

tabled. Finally, the participants were provided with a platform to give recommendations on what an ATT should achieve as measure in the control of Arms.

### **Presentations**

The following papers were presented during the meeting and after the presentations; participants were granted a chance of asking questions and even exchange ideas.

- ❖ A paper on the Arms Trade Treaty.
- ❖ A paper on the existing initiatives on the problem of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

### **Presentation on ATT by the coordinator of Rwanda National Focal Point, Spt Eric Kayiranga**

The United Nations (UN) Secretary General has called on the governments to submit their views on the feasibility, scope and parameters of an Arms Trade Treaty. The secretary General wants to make sure that these submissions from governments incorporate the views of millions of people around the world who are affected by armed violence everyday. The UN also wants to ensure that millions of people who support a strong treaty based on international humanitarian and human rights law are observed during the government consultation process.

In many cases parliamentarians and government officials will be invited to participate in the consultations. The results of the consultations will be made available to governments for consideration. The ultimate goal is to ensure a large number of positive and useful government submission that take into account the views of the people.



SaferRwanda- Coordinator Madam **Muhongerwa N. Christine** and National Focal Point Coordinator Spt **Eric Kayiranga** presenting relevant papers in the meeting.

### **Presentation on existing initiatives on SALW by the coordinator of SaferRwanda, Muhongerwa N. Christine**

The apprehension of the serious problems caused by the proliferation of the illicit small arms and light weapons and the collective initiatives to avert and combat them are recent.

In 1995, the former United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Ghali, presented his

“supplement to an agenda for peace” to the UN general assembly on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the UN. Under the arms control and disarmament section of the report, he warned about the spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons in the world especially in the developing countries. The UN government panel of experts on small arms was set up between 1996 and 1998 and later produced a report on the magnitude and impact of the small arms problem across the world. The report was presented to the UN general assembly. It was then decided that a global process to address the issue was need.

Following the increased concern and awareness by governments and civil societies of the problems related to small arms since 1995, a number of international regional, continental and sub regional agreements on arms were concluded. The following are those that are particularly relevant to the Great Lakes region and horn of Africa:

1. The UN Programme of Action (July 2001).
2. The Bamako Declaration on an African common position on the proliferation of illicit small arms (December 2000).
3. The Nairobi declaration on SALW in the Great Lakes

region and the Horn of Africa (March 2000).

4. The Nairobi protocol which was signed in Nairobi (May 2004)



**The coordinator of SaferRwanda presenting a paper on the existing initiatives.**

During this session, participants intervened by asking for clarification on some points and also supplemented on some issues. The presentation session was followed by a group discussion session.



**Participants of the meeting in the presentation session.**

## **Group discussions**

After presentations, participants were divided into four discussion groups. These discussions were aimed at creating a brainstorming atmosphere for the participants. Much was achieved from these discussions on the ATT. In the discussion process, the following questions were distributed to the groups for exploration and they were as follows;

- 1.** Do you think ATT is important and why should the government support ATT?
- 2.** In what ways can ATT have an impact towards the Citizens individually and the Country as a whole?
- 3.** If countries fail to reach an agreement on ATT, what would be the consequences?
- 4.** How have you been affected by armed violence?
- 5.** What is the economic cost of armed violence in the country?
- 6.** What would be the impact of such conflicts on the citizens' general life?
- 7.** Is there any importance to stop transfers of weapons to your country?
- 8.** Is it important that your government collaborates with other governments on the ATT?

## **Results of the group discussions**

These are participants' answers to the above discussion questions from their respective groups.

### **Group one (1)**

**Qn1.** Do you think ATT is important and why should the government support ATT?

Yes an ATT is important and should be supported by the government of Rwanda due to the following Factors;

- The past history of Rwanda whose conflict was attributed to small arms.
- Rwanda's geographical location in a region which has suffered armed conflicts for a long period of time.
- Too much availability of arms would halt control measures hence a reason for Rwanda to support it.
- Rwanda's submission to the BAMAKO declaration, Nairobi Protocol and Convention is its self evidence of her commitment to the ATT.
- The illicit possession of arms attributes to high insecurity that has characterized our region in the past years hence a reason why Rwanda should support ATT.

**Qn2.** In what ways can ATT have an impact towards the Citizens individually and the Country as a whole?

- The citizens of the country would enjoy full fledged security.
- Human rights would be respected.
- There would be a recognized improvement of political and Economical stability which would enhance the country's development in her social and Economic structures.



**Members of the group brainstorming on ATT**

### **Group two (2)**

**Qn3.** If countries fail to reach an agreement on ATT, what would be the consequences?

If countries fail to reach an agreement on ATT the following would happen;

- If there are no resolutions and laws against the

illegal trade of arms, countries will have strength and power to manufacture or produce more weapons (arms) beyond the required production capacity which shall lead to illicit supply of excess arms.

- Loopholes in the market due to excess supply will lead to high increase in the process of the arms transfer which will lead to more people having acquisition of arms & thus in an illicit way which will lead to a complicit constant conflict due to the ways these acquired arms are used.
- Control systems of these arms trafficking would be very difficult given the prevailing conflicting situations once there are no regulatory laws on arms trafficking.
- This would lead to high insecurity in the region.
- There would be high increase on the crime rates such as robbery, individual revenge thus internal conflicts would be high as well.
- The law would also loose value hence there is no security in the country and the entire world.

**Qn4.** How have you been affected by armed violence?

- Armed violence fueled the 1994 genocide in which more than a million people perished.
  - Rebellious groups like the interahamwe became rampant.
  - Armed robbery increased.
  - This armed violence is the cause of insecurity in the region thus affecting social mobility.
  - Armed caused a chain of problems like; increased number of orphans, widows, increased number of the disabled and other social problems.
  - Destruction and retarding of infrastructural development.
  - Increased the conceptualization and perception of the gun for peace ideology.
- Armed violence halts agro development.
  - They retard investment rate in the country.
  - Tourism declines rapidly thus affecting the economy of the country.
  - Armed violence deteriorates diplomatic relations of countries.
  - This violence hampers the tax base of the country.
  - Foreign aid is minimized tremendously.
  - It leads to misallocation of resources like in purchasing Arms.
  - Hampers infrastructural development.

**Qn6.** What would be the impact of such conflicts on the citizens' general life?

- It would lead to depopulation hence affecting the economy of the region.
- There would also be a rampant misallocation of resources since there would be no control measures on the buying and usage of small arms.
- There would be an increased number of vulnerable groups hence affecting the social status of the country.
- There would be loss of individual property due to the increase of internally displaced



**Members of the group brainstorming on ATT**

**Group four (4)**

**Qn5** What is the economic cost of armed violence in the country?

- people seeking for refugee.
- It also contributes to child abuse and human rights violation and it is also a contributing factor to divisionism with in communities and families a good example are the Karamajongos and the Turkanas from Uganda and Kenya respectively.
  - It also leads to loss of trust between neighboring countries due the intensifying conflicts between countries it brings about accusations of harboring rebels.

- To strengthen the relationship with neighboring countries.
- Stopping illegal arms entering the country would bring about peace and security in the country.
- It gives room to socio economic development.

However if the Arms transfer is legal and it meant to a security purpose of a given country then it would be important.

**Qn8** Is it important that your government collaborates with other governments on the ATT?

Collaboration of governments in the development of a comprehensive ATT is quite important to the country in particular and to the world in general in matters of security. This is mainly because if some countries decline to collaborate in the formulation of an ATT then illegal transfers will continue thus leading to global insecurity.



**Members of the group brainstorming on ATT**

**Group four (4)**

**Qn.7** Is there any importance to stop transfers of weapons to your country?

When these transfers are illegal, it is quite important to stop them and it is mainly because of the following reasons;



**Members of the group brainstorming on ATT**

However, one can not go with out saying that once there is a legal frame work for the end usage of such arms say for a genuine cause in a country like strengthening security of a given country then acquiring arms would be important.

### **Resolutions of the meeting**

- Participants from these consultative meetings emphasized on a more proactive and strong commitment on ATT by all UN member countries.
- The efforts needed in the present situation if designing a proactive ATT are willingness and collaboration of countries.
- The control of Arms should be tackled in a broader perspective whereby it includes laws that account the impact bearers.

- The ATT principles and mechanisms that will be setout should be applied equally by all countries world wide.
- Effective control of the Arms trade by suppliers outside their origin countries should include measures against the transfer of surplus arms to prevent the problem globally.
- A sustainable ATT can not be achieved in isolation of measures to curb down political instabilities that encourage the trade of Arms.
- An effective ATT should extensively underscore the accountability of end user governments to the impact bearers (ordinary people).
- Any destruction of civilian life for example genocide related human disasters resulting from arms should be considered equal responsibility of the end user and the producer of such Arms.

### **Conclusions**

After thorough consultative meetings, participants recognized that instability, wars and human suffering in the Great Lakes Region and even

the rest of the world are caused by arms. It is in this regard that Rwanda in particular and the world in general should strongly support the ATT if the control of arms is to be tangibly achieved.