



Women peace and security: The role of an Arms Trade Treaty

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Conference Room A

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An ATT that complements Resolution 1325 and 1820 will make a difference for women in Africa

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"We didn't know the soldiers were going to hurt us. We heard guns, I tried to run away. A soldier stopped me. He hit me and pulled off my clothes at gunpoint."

"I cannot sleep at night after what I saw, and I am scared. I saw lots of women raped, and lots of dead."

I speak the words of women in Guinea who were raped by armed forces on twenty eight September.

Some of you have heard me already say that there is no security without women's security and no peacebuilding without peace for women. The words of these survivors from Guinea proves that.

Ladies and gentlemen, Chair, and members of the panel

I am Michèle Pépé, from the IANSA Women's Network, and President of the Ivorian section of the West African Action Network on small arms (WAANSA).

It is an honour for me to be invited to this panel, and speak with colleagues from the IANSA Women's Network and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

I would like to thank the IANSA Women's Network and the Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN for inviting me to speak today.

Please forgive my modest English.

Today I will share my point of view with you, to tell you how small arms are affecting women in Africa, and how an ATT can support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions thirteen twenty five, and eighteen twenty.

Ladies and gentlemen

The issue of the proliferation, the movement and the lack control on small arms and light weapons is one of the main challenges that Africa faces today, and African women are affected the most.

In my country Côte d'Ivoire, pro-government and rebel forces have subjected hundreds of women and girls to rape and other brutal sexual assaults with impunity.

The worst sexual violence took place during the peak of the armed conflict from two thousand and two, to two thousand and four.

Since the signature of the Ouagadougou political agreement, sexual violence at gunpoint is being committed by all sectors of society, no longer limited to the armed forces. This is because there are so many guns easily available, and lack of control from national authorities.

In the words of a woman from Abidjan, "During the crisis which followed the opposition march I was raped by men with guns. They came into our house. They forced my husband to sit and watch them raping me under the threat of their guns. This shame prevents me from looking at my husband today."

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than one thousand civilians have been killed, nearly nine hundred thousand people have fled their homes, and at least seven thousand women and girls have been raped since January this year.

Evidence suggests that the use of sexual violence within the Great Lakes region is part of a larger trend. The last twenty years has seen an increase in armed sexual violence as a military strategy. The violence is becoming more brutal.

Each armed group has developed their own terrible methods. For example, in Burundi, armed groups rape men as well as women. The Mai Mai — local defence forces in Rwanda, and also in the DRC — rape with tree branches or bayonets, and mutilate their victim's sexual organs.

We know in gun violence, often the victim will not survive to tell her tale. If she does, she may not speak about the violence she has endured at gunpoint and does not officially report it.

We must remember that every statistic we hear or use represents a woman or a girl who is suffering from the impact of small arms. There are thousands of others, including those not directly in the firing line.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Small arms underpin the brutal conflicts of many African countries.

Data on arms transfers is difficult to obtain. No system has been set up to observe and control the traffic of guns, and no arms brokers or traffickers have been brought to justice.

The lack of international and national laws governing the arms trade allows the easy entry of guns into many conflict and unstable zones. International arms dealers have ways to get around national laws to supply arms to anyone who wants them.

Where is the conscience of the arms trade?

Ladies and gentlemen,

Resolution thirteen twenty five demands that women should be involved in all decision making instruments in order they can effectively partake in making decisions about the future of their communities and countries.

Despite some progress, governments continue to find it difficult to translate Resolution thirteen twenty five into concrete policy and strategic actions in conflict-affected regions, where it is most critical that peace and security efforts take women's needs and capacities into account. The ATT provides an opportunity to do this.

A strong and effective ATT will support and complement the broader goals of thirteen twenty five including conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict peacebuilding with the active involvement and participation of women.

It will also form part of a wider set of policies which complement thirteen twenty five and link to others that are not limited to 'women, peace and security'. These include the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms, The Geneva Declaration, and the Wassenaar Arrangement amongst others.

Therefore I urge all UN member states to act in favour of a strong and effective ATT.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have an important opportunity to make a difference. We can work towards the development and implementation of efficient judicial mechanisms in order to prevent violence through our individual and collective, national and international support for the Treaty.

Women of Africa want to be involved in making safer homes, communities and countries. We must place importance on removing guns to make our families and communities more secure, and to reinforce the message

that an ATT will help to prevent violence. Ending the irresponsible arms trade is key to creating lasting peace and security.

States and the UN should act on their own words in UN conventions and resolutions such as CEDAW and thirteen twenty five to protect women, and recognise women's capabilities by giving them decision making positions in arms trade regulation.

Arms control processes must incorporate thirteen twenty five, and include women's groups, NGOs and female community leaders. Grassroots women are experts in highlighting local and national issues on small arms and women.

Thank you.