



*PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
TO THE UNITED NATIONS*

**Statement
by H.E. Mr. Miloš Koterec
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to the United Nations
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Mr. Chairman,

Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you for assuming the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would like to assure you, as well as the members of the Bureau, of my delegation's full support for your endeavors in advancing our work.

The distinguished representative of Sweden has conveyed the views that the members of the European Union share in the domain of conventional weapons. My delegation would like to add several brief remarks reflecting Slovakia's views on two specific issues that we deem particularly important: national reporting under the CCW and the Mine Ban Convention, as well as the Arms Trade Treaty.

NATIONAL REPORTING WITHIN CCW AND MBC

Addressing the issue of National Reporting in the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and the Mine Ban Convention, it is essential to stress that the High Contracting Parties to the CCW have a political obligation to submit annually their national reports on the implementation of this instrument as a whole, under the CCW Compliance mechanism established by the Third Review Conference in 2006. Furthermore, there are even legal obligations required under two of its protocols, namely the Amended Protocol II (APII) on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices and the Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (PV). The States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention are also bound to a similar legal obligation within the instrument. National reporting ranks high among the elements essential to the implementation of the CCW and the MBC. It promotes a culture of compliance, enhances consciousness of the obligations of the States Parties at various national levels, including those related to their internal structures and sets up a basic framework for international cooperation. Furthermore, complying with these obligations would set an excellent example among the States parties and create a credible precedent for treaty implementation.

Statistics reveal that, despite these political and legal commitments, the participation in submitting the national reports remains relatively low. In quantifiable terms, the percentage of annual returns varies from approximately 30 to 60 per cent on average, which is testimony of the poor level of engagement by the respective States parties in their efforts to reach the lofty goals set forth by the respective instruments they have adhered to.

However, national reporting under the two CCW Protocols should not only be perceived as an obligation, thus creating an excessive burden to the national administrations of the States Parties, but also it deserves to be recognized as a very useful tool that can bring a lot of benefit to the State Parties, especially to their internal structures dealing with various aspects of *the national implementation*. Therefore, the burning question which remains is why the participation in submitting national reports continues to be so unsatisfactory?

There may be a number of various factors that bring the States Parties into non-compliance with their political or legal obligations within the instruments they are party to. The lack of awareness may feature high among them. A number of States Parties may not only be incognizant of the obligation to submit national reports or their updates on a regular basis, but they may also be unaware of the fact that there is an abundance of resources that States can take advantage of in the process of elaborating the required submissions.

These resources consist of (1) databases of all national reports submitted, and (2) guides on national reporting. Notably, the guides on national reporting were elaborated with the intention to serve as a handy tool in the form of recommendations that would motivate and assist the States Parties in preparing and submitting their national reports to fulfill their obligations under the respective provisions of the instruments they are party to. The existing databases within the APII, PV, CCW Compliance Mechanism and the MBC provide a golden opportunity to compare and study the approaches that other States Parties have taken so far in their submissions and to take relevant lessons from them. The guides related to the CCW Amended Protocol II and to the MBC have been in use already for some time now, while the Guide on National reporting under Protocol V only exists for the time being as a preliminary draft version and will be considered formally at the forthcoming Third Conference of the High Contracting Parties to CCW Protocol V in November this year. Both the databases as well as the aforementioned guides are available at the websites devoted to these respective issues (www.unog.ch/ccw and www.apminebanconvention.org, respectively).

States parties who have failed so far to submit the required national reports should do it without delay. The availability of afore-said resources considerably facilitates their duty to deliver on this essential commitment.

Nonetheless, the most important element here is the will to comply with the obligations vis-à-vis national reporting. While the quality of submissions is of high importance, this aspect can be addressed in a step-by-step process. Annual updates of national reports provide an opportunity to enhance the quality of submission, if necessary, so that they serve their purpose in its entire range. In other words, it is imperative that the States parties do not shy away from submitting the required reports because of concerns about the quality of the initial data.

It is our hope that this message will get to the relevant authorities of the High Contracting Parties to the CCW and its respective Protocols and those of the States Parties to the MBC. Positive effect on participation in national reporting, on substantive enhancement of the quality of the reports as well as on the universalization of these instruments is the expected outcome of the endeavors carried out by a number of actors engaged in this field.

ARMS TRADE TREATY

I would like to use this opportunity to briefly comment on an issue that in our view constitutes the

most important development in the domain of conventional weapons in the last couple of years and will remain high on our agenda in the period ahead of us. The proliferation of conventional weapons, especially of small arms and light weapons, has risen to such dimensions that their effects are justifiably compared to those of weapons of mass destruction. Intensive discussions on regulating the trade in arms in global terms has been ongoing in this forum already for some four years. We are convinced that the need of laying down international standards for transfers of conventional weapons and ammunition is becoming increasingly pressing. In order to address this matter adequately, the time is ripe to move from general discussions into substantive negotiations with a view to developing a truly comprehensive, universal and legally binding instrument that would effectively prevent the diversion of legally traded products of defense industries to illicit markets and irresponsible users. Slovakia is convinced that the UN is the proper forum for negotiating such an instrument. It goes without saying that the civil society engagement is pivotal to the success of our endeavors and we appreciate their active involvement in the process.

Let me conclude Mr. Chairman by reiterating Slovakia's commitment to work with all partners in advancing these efforts and establish expeditiously the highest possible legally binding international standards that would stop the terror stemming from their absence.

Thank you for your attention.