

OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY - STRATEGIC TRADE MANAGEMENT OFFICE ON THE RATIFICATION OF THE ARMS TRADE TREATY



ATTY. LUIS MANUEL M. CATIBAYAN
DIRECTOR OF DTI-STMO



SOURCE: GMA NEWS

SEN. AQUILINO "KOKO" PIMENTEL III
CHAIRMAN OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. Chair, Senators, government colleagues, and fellow resource persons, good afternoon. We want to thank the body for inviting us to this public hearing and allowing us to share our insights on the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

The STMO fully supports the ratification of the ATT. Being a State Party to the treaty will allow the Philippines to:

- participate in decision-making on treaty amendments and matters related to treaty implementation;
- demonstrate commitment to contribute to the global efforts of the proper management of conventional arms;
- boost its reputation as a safe trading environment, thus, build investor confidence; and
- gain access to a Voluntary Trust Fund, which state parties avail to support the development of their respective national regulatory agencies.

We note that Republic Act No. 10697 or the Strategic Trade Management Act (STMA) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) already establish the legal framework for the Philippine implementation of the ATT. The STMA was enacted to fulfill the Philippines' international obligations, including the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 which prevents the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and other related weapons systems. The ATT, on the other hand, standardizes state actions towards regulating conventional weapons and their transfers, which the STMA controls. The specific provisions of the STMA that fulfill the general requirements of the ATT have been outlined in our submitted position paper.

We would also like to take this opportunity to inform the body of the steps the STMO has undertaken to ensure ATT compliance. We have been making (exerted) efforts in harmonizing the STMA with other related regulations, such as the Comprehensive Firearms Law. We are formalizing an agreement on the jurisdiction of regulated items with the Philippine National Police-Firearms and Explosives Office. Both agencies are also looking into applying the same risk-assessment criteria in our processes.

Additionally, in accordance with Section 15 of the STMA and supporting the Philippine government's Defense Modernization Program, the STMO has issued fifteen license exemption certificates to the Department of National Defense. The certificates come with a set of conditions compliant with ATT requirements.

We have taken note of the industry stakeholders' concern that the ATT will impose controls that will place the Philippines at the mercy of ATT State Parties, resulting in denials of arms import. In response thereto, the STMO concurs with the DND's 2018 position on the ATT that "the decision to allow or deny the import of arms is based on the criteria and discretion of the exporting state." Ratification of the ATT assures exporters worldwide that the Philippines has national controls consistent with global standards. It will not hamper but rather facilitate the trade of conventional arms.

We at the STMO envision the Philippines as one of the leading figures in implementing the ATT and other international instruments on conventional arms in the region. By setting an example, we hope to encourage our Asian neighbors to ratify the treaty and to further work together in maintaining international peace and security.

In closing, the STMO would like to reiterate its support for the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.