



**Informal Preparatory Meeting for the
Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade
Treaty**

**Voluntary Trust Fund
Presentation by Ambassador Dell Higgle of New Zealand**

30 April 2021

Thank you.

At the outset, I would like to express New Zealand's sincere thanks to the President of the Seventh Conference of States Parties – the distinguished Ambassador of Sierra Leone – for skilfully steering the work of this group. I would also like to thank the ATT Secretariat and the 14 other members of the Voluntary Trust Fund Selection Committee for their dedication and support. In particular, we acknowledge the hard work of the German delegation in chairing the VTF for its first three years of life.

As many of you are no doubt aware, the VTF is a flexible multi-donor instrument set up and operating to assist States Parties with implementing their national obligations under the Treaty. It was established by the Second Conference of States Parties in 2016 pursuant to Article 16 of the Treaty.

At the Fourth Meeting of States Parties in Tokyo, it was decided that I would take over as Chair of the VTF Selection Committee following the Fifth Meeting of States Parties. Last year, my term as Chair was extended beyond that initial one-year term.

Funding

- Since its first call for contributions in November 2016, the Fund has received more than US\$9 million in voluntary contributions by 28 States, representing a wide range of regional groups.
- I would like to seize this opportunity to sincerely thank all donors for their contributions and encourage all States Parties in a position to do

so to make further financial contributions to the VTF. Although the financial situation of the VTF is sound at present, we must not rest on our laurels and take this for granted for the future. The continuity and diversity of financial contributions are – of course – critical to both the sustainability and credibility of the task the VTF has been set of advancing implementation of the Treaty.

- It is for this reason that the New Zealand Government has decided this year to contribute a further NZ\$100,000 to the Fund, tagged specifically for projects in the Pacific region.

Brief update on last year's cycle

- The Covid-19 pandemic affected all of our lives, and indeed our work, last year, and the 2020 VTF cycle was no exception. Because last year's proposals were submitted before the pandemic took hold, we reached out to each applicant to ensure that they wished to proceed with their project and to confirm that they were able to meet health and safety requirements. But I am delighted to report that nine projects approved last year are progressing well, with almost all of these projects now having commenced.

Outreach

- The pandemic also impacted the New Zealand delegation's ability to hold some of the in-person outreach activities we had planned during the last twelve months – including the VTF Side event during First Committee, as we held in 2019; and the practical workshop on the VTF application process for potential applicants, as we held in Geneva in January 2020. However, we adapted our approach and produced a series of three short instructional videos to assist potential applicants in preparing an application for VTF funding. The videos provide an introduction to the VTF; top tips for filling out the application form and tips for completing the budget form. They are available on the

VTF website and we would encourage all States Parties, and particularly prospective VTF applicants, to view them.

- We have also made some tweaks to the VTF application forms to make them more user-friendly.

The current cycle

- The call for project proposals under the current cycle was issued on 2 December 2020, and the application period was open from then until 12 February.
- I am pleased to report that we have received a total of 21 applications for support from the VTF during this year's cycle, from 20 states. This makes it clear that there remains strong interest in the Fund and in ensuring the ATT's implementation.
- I will convene a virtual meeting of the Selection Committee on 27 May, at which the Selection Committee will conduct a full assessment of these applications.
- Applicants will be advised of the Committee's decisions by 11 June. However, at that point there may still be some projects that the Committee would like to approve, but for which we require some further information, clarification or refinement in order to give them the green light.
- We will endeavour to ensure that any applications that are not approved by the Committee receive sufficient feedback to allow them to be revised and resubmitted in a future VTF cycle. We also hope that prospective applicants hold on to any project ideas that aren't feasible at present due to Covid-19, with a view to submitting them in the future.

In closing, please allow me to once again extend my sincere thanks to all VTF donors, applicants, the Selection Committee and the Secretariat for your commitment to the Fund, and by extension the full and effective implementation of our Treaty.