

**REGIONAL INITIATIVE: Advancing the Pacific Consensus for Disarmament**

Please complete each section below.

**Contact Details**

Please provide the following contact details:

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**Name of Initiative**

Advancing the Pacific Consensus for Disarmament

**Background and Rationale**

You may consider: What is the issue being addressed by this initiative? What are the causes of this issue? Are there relevant studies that have been carried out to support the issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

Our world is a fearful place, spattered with blood, angry men and loose guns. But not everywhere. One sprawling region has largely avoided, and at times even reversed, the steady proliferation of illegal firearms and death by gunshot. Twelve out of 16 Pacific Island Forum nations are patrolled by routinely [unarmed police](#). Ten have no military. With little or no opposition, island communities of the southwest Pacific have both resolved in law and been actively encouraged to remain unarmed.

This is no mere accident. After a [string](#) of military coups and mutinies, tribal and ethnic violence, rising armed crime and gun homicide in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands and Fiji, Pacific governments tied disarmament and weapons disposal to [aspirations](#) for political autonomy and independence and did their best to disarm the neighbourhood. Instead of rushing in more guns to restore peace, we tried the opposite and it worked. Pacific nations have in recent years forged a largely unnoticed but, in retrospect, startling regional consensus, which now sets us apart from much of the world.

Whilst Pacific Island States are not major importers or exporters of arms, recent history in countries such as [PNG](#) and [Solomon Islands](#) has shown that a small number of illicit firearms can have a disproportionately large impact on small, developing nations – displacing large numbers of people, restricting access to basic services, and negatively impacting sustainable development and the economy. Instability, within a small developing nation, can lead to donor concern and withdrawal of vital aid funding, furthering destabilising the economy. In order to strengthen arms control and preserve our current stability we need to uniform arms regulation and establish common standards on the transfer of arms. By implementing our initiative to do so, we will advance the Pacific Consensus on Disarmament and show the world we are a voice worth listening to on arms control.

Many Pacific Island States do have controls for the import, export and transfer of arms, however gaps remain. Outdated legislation and enforcement challenges, have been identified as leading contributors to small arms-related problems in the region. Combined with the porous borders and maritime environment of Pacific nations, these gaps could facilitate increased arms flows through the region, as well as other illicit goods. Likewise, shortfalls in regulation and enforcement increase the possibility of exploitation by arms dealers either transferring arms through or to the region or by establishing the region as a hub for their operations. For example, in 2009 a Vanuatu based company was responsible for an [illicit arms transfer](#) from North Korea to Iran via Thailand, using an agent in New Zealand. This was made possible by the effective lack of controls on arms brokering in our region.

The [Arms Trade Treaty \(ATT\)](#) is the first truly international instrument that establishes a universal set of controls around the currently under-regulated trade in conventional (non-nuclear) arms. It obliges states who plan to authorise a transfer of conventional arms to another state to first undertake a rigorous risk assessment to establish if there could be a substantial risk that those arms will be used to facilitate serious violations of human rights or humanitarian law, will be diverted to unauthorised or criminal end-users, or will prolong armed conflict and undermine sustainable development.

As a universal instrument, it is imperative that the ATT applies in the Pacific. To date, there are inconsistencies in our region's engagement with the ATT. Three states have signed, [ratified](#) and are implementing the treaty, five others have signed but not ratified the treaty, three states have submitted an ATT [Baseline Assessment](#) and signed the treaty but have not ratified it, while several have not formally engaged at all. If every region apart from the Pacific implemented strong common standards for the transfer of arms, then the negative impacts on our small island region could be severe. A conspicuous gap would be created in the global system, making the Pacific more attractive as a base or transit region for irresponsible and illicit arms dealers. This would increase the risk of transnational crime, armed violence, conflict and terrorism. A strong universally implemented ATT would sharply curtail these risks.

Ratifying or acceding to the ATT sends a strong message to the global community that the Pacific is committed to maintaining and sustaining peace. Not only benefiting the region and its people through the control of arms, a condition for safer communities, this initiative would enhance the region's role as a key player in peace and security debates, dialogue and negotiations at the international level.

## Description

*Please provide a brief overview of this initiative. Try to address the following: Does this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region? What makes this initiative of importance to the Pacific region as a whole? Who would implement this initiative? Who are the main beneficiaries? Are regulatory or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative? How would the initiative be funded? Has this initiative been carried out previously? What are the key risks in implementing this initiative? Are there any complementary projects and programmes currently active? What is the proposed timeframe for this initiative? How would the initiative be sustained over the proposed timeframe?*

*Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.*

Our low cost initiative aims to fill gaps in the standardisation of arms control in the Pacific region by formalising the determination of Forum Leaders to unite and work together to strengthen the 'Pacific Consensus for Disarmament', providing a global role model of support for international instrumental frameworks. Our initiative asks Forum Leaders to declare it a priority of the region's Member States to either deposit an instrument of ratification, acceptance or approval, or for those who have not signed to accede to the ATT and publicly support its implementation.

A robust ATT, ratified and implemented in the Pacific, will provide a strong mandate for the strengthening of domestic and regional regulation of arms. The ATT will increase the transparency of the arms trade and of individual arms transfers, reducing the risk for corruption inherent in the process and complement the existing regional drive to implement the provisions of the UN small arms Programme of Action. Furthermore, the ATT, provides important opportunities to improve legislative and enforcement capacity in Pacific Island States in order to better regulate the use and

movement of arms in the region.

To institutionalise and to promote a 'Pacific regional consensus on disarmament', Forum Leaders could provide oversight, support and be willing to incorporate the rules of the treaty into national laws with parliamentary approval. While support can be provided to States in the implementation of the ATT, the instrument of ratification or accession, which declares a State's consent to abide by the rules of the treaty internationally, must first be [signed and deposited](#) at the United Nations by the Head of State, Head of Government or Minister of Foreign Affairs. Upon depositing the instrument the ATT requires that States Parties take measures to implement its provisions and designate competent national authorities to ensure an effective and transparent control system. Depending on current legislation, in some cases it would require regulatory or legislative changes at the national level to give domestic effect to the treaty. To assist, the UN Office for Disarmament has available [model](#) instruments for deposit. The New Zealand government has proposed [Model legislation](#) which can be adapted to each country context. The ATT [Baseline Assessment Project](#) also provides the starting point from which each State may judge its progress.

By the end of 2015, we would like to see those Pacific States already signed onto the Treaty to ratify it by depositing the appropriate instrument with the UN, and to submit an ATT Baseline Assessment. This would allow States to submit their first annual report to the UN due 31 May, 2016. By the end of 2016, we are calling for all other states to accede to the ATT, and submit an ATT Baseline Assessment. The instrument should be deposited to the UN, as soon as possible upon appropriate national parliamentary discussion, but ideally before September 2016.

The ATT is supported by an international cooperation and assistance framework, enabling Pacific Island States to request financial and technical assistance through donors and other development resources for implementation of their ATT obligations. Pacific States which have already ratified the Treaty could assist those with capacity gaps. Furthermore, the [Pacific Small Arms Action Group](#) (PSAAG) is actively working to support the implementation of the ATT. PSAAG, who has received funds from [UNSCAR](#), can support the initiative\* in partnership with PIF, and ensure its sustainability by providing technical assistance over the proposed timeframe. Through regional and national workshops, both PIF and PSAAG can assist in building the capacity of States and their officials as to what the Treaty is, the value of participation in the Treaty and how to create an implementation action plan.

As the ATT is a newly developed international legal instrument, an initiative calling for regional ratification and accession to the Treaty has not yet been carried out. One risk of the initiative is that only some States participate. Advancing, promoting and showing pride in our region's consensus on disarmament, benefits all the Leaders, the Pacific and its people. For true solidarity within the region, and to be a global leader on arms control among regions, all states must ratify or accede to the Treaty. By implementing the initiative by the end of 2016, the Pacific consensus on disarmament would be much strengthened by ours being the first region in which all States ratify or accede to the ATT.

*\*More information on how below in "Additional Information" section.*

## **Alignment to Regional Vision, Values and Objectives**

*Briefly describe how your initiative supports the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These can be found in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism document or in the submissions guideline document.*

*Please limit your response to no more than 500 words*

As Philip Alpers of [Gunpolicy.org](http://Gunpolicy.org) so eloquently [shows](#) us the Pacific consensus for disarmament has become a [trend](#) in recent years. While other regions have chosen to fight conflict and ethnic tension with weapons the Pacific have done the opposite. By taking weapons off the street we set an example to the world that conflict or ethnic tension can be reduced in the absence of these weapons. This is a clear demonstration of the Pacific regions commitment to its vision for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free, health and productive lives.

We, as Pacific people, with our point of difference as a region have created the more pacific climate we live in today. Without a common standard for the transfer of arms, the negative impact on the Pacific could be severe – damaging years of work in preserving the peaceful, harmonious and secure region we have been working together to build. Given the Pacific's comparable advantage in terms of arms proliferation, continued and sustained implementation of arms control and enforcement are required to not only address the negative effects of arms on society, but also to preserve the region's successes.

Following armed violence in the Pacific, for the rule of law and human rights to be re-established, for health care and justice to be accessible, for good work to proceed in a safe environment, firearms have been seen as the most immediate impediment to recovery and redevelopment. The ATT, by regulating the flow of weapons, is a tool to prevent arms from being an impediment now and in the future. By restricting the illicit flow of weapons it contributes to the Pacific region's value to enhance security and to ensure a more stable and safe human conditions for the peoples of the Pacific. With fewer weapons the region is more peaceful, harmonious and secure.

Within the Pacific, a foundation has been set to ensure the initiative's success – there has been initial cooperation and consensus amongst States with a common Forum position established in [support](#) of the Arms Trade Treaty. Our initiative calls for the region to go beyond agreeing on “common international standards”, to strengthening the regions cooperation and integration by actually implementing those “common international standards” through regional ratification and accession to the Treaty. This embraces the regions values of good governance and rule of law, greatly strengthening efforts to harmonise arms transfer regulations across the Pacific. Uniform standards will fortify the open, honest and enduring partnerships between states, within the region and beyond on the issue of arms control – demonstrate leadership on regional and international cooperation.

## **Additional Information**

*Please provide or attach additional information in support of this initiative. Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.*

### **OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE INITIATIVE**

#### **Overall Goal of the Initiative**

*To strengthen and support the 'Pacific consensus on disarmament', thus reducing the vulnerability of our region to illicit arms and armed violence, filling gaps and harmonising arms transfer safeguards across the Pacific through the adoption of strong international standards for arms control across the region.*

#### **Objectives\***

1. To encourage a strong political statement and commitment to becoming a leading region in the ratification/accession of the ATT with all 16 States depositing their instrument to the UN by the end of 2016.
2. To increase the knowledge and awareness of the advantages and synergies of the ATT with other regional security frameworks.
3. To build capacity of Member States on how to incorporate the required regulatory and legislative changes at a domestic level.

*\*More information can be provided on indicators if necessary.*

### **TARGET GROUP OF INITIATIVE**

The success of the Pacific disarmament to date has been an outcome of strong support from Pacific leaders. For this initiative to succeed it is essential that strong support continues and is emphasised.

- All 16 Forum Leaders – to provide the political support required for the success of this initiative, including signing and depositing the ATT instrument to the UN.
- PIF Member officials responsible for, and/or a part of national arms control and disarmament processes within their Ministries – to establish and implement a plan of action for the ratification of, or accession to the ATT.

## **IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

### **Pacific Member States**

Each Member State will be responsible for the implementation of the initiative and the adoption of the Treaty at the domestic level. Member States can be assisted by PIF, PSAAG and donor States.

### **Pacific Island Forum (PIF)**

A high-level statement and political commitment by Forum Leaders to support the initiative will provide PIF with a mandate to work with civil society to assist the region in strengthening its consensus on disarmament. PIF can assist by coordinating these efforts, establishing and linking contacts and providing input.

### **Pacific Small Arms Action Group (PSAAG)**

PSAAG is a network of 19 NGOs and international organisations across the Pacific, formed in July 2009 to coordinate civil society action to reduce the deadly impact of small arms and light weapons in our region. PSAAG facilitates Pacific implementation of the United Nations small arms Programme of Action (UNPoA) and promotes activation of the legally binding UN Arms Trade Treaty. We also use our civil society networks and expertise to support local, national and regional initiatives that tackle armed violence in our region, especially where it undermines justice, human security, development, public health, gender equity and human rights.

Our Members ensure a strong Pacific voice at international forums. As the only Pacific-based coalition focussed on armed violence we facilitate coordination, information sharing and lobbying between governments, UN and regional bodies, NGOs and other stakeholders. PSAAG publishes and disseminates evidence-based research and policy analysis and supports partners in local initiatives to reduce and prevent armed violence while reducing the proliferation of firearms in our region.

PSAAG can provide much needed support, impetus and capacity for ATT implementation within the broader context of security sector reform/governance processes in the region. With political recognition for the initiative, PSAAG will be able to work closely with PIF to build the capacity and provide technical assistance to Member States where need is identified.

## **PLANNED STRATEGY**

The implementation plan of the initiative requires commitment at a regional level by PIF Member States to ratify and accede to the ATT by the end of 2016, thus enhancing the Pacific consensus on disarmament. Once a commitment has been made, each Member State should drive its own process to achieve this goal, dependent on their current situation, capacity and needs. This would be done within a framework of international cooperation and assistance by the initiative's implementing partners, and coordinated by PIF.

### Develop and implement action plan

Each State will need to evaluate its current engagement with the ATT and the steps necessary to ratify or accede to the ATT. Upon identifying these needs, each State should create a plan of action to achieve the end goal of adopting the Treaty into national regulation and legislation. During this process, PSAAG can act as a resource and assist on a technical level.

Based on these plans of action, PSAAG will be able to assist in the following:

- Co-organising national and regional workshops with government officials to deepen their understanding of the ATT.
- Providing experts to meet with government officials to raise awareness and build capacity on the ATT processes.
- Working closely with government officials to assist in writing ATT Baseline Assessments and annual reports.
- Supporting officials in adapting the ATT model legislation.
- Assisting states to access resources for implementation.

### Provision of Materials and Participation in Workshops

PSAAG has already been provided with funds from UNSCAR to hold 4 workshops on the ATT – 1 sub-regional workshop and 3 subsequent workshops in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. For sustainability and success, PSAAG's UNSCAR project must be complemented by the proposed initiative to politically commit to, and take active steps as a region to achieve complete ratification and accession by all Member States by the end of 2016. As part of this we ask States to commit to sending officials to participate in one or more of the workshops.

In July 2015 PSAAG will distribute an ATT Implementation Guide, plus a guide on gender and arms available for Member States to assist in assessing their current situation, understanding the synergies between current regional security frameworks and the ATT, and identifying the steps

required to incorporate the Treaty into a domestic context. The provision of materials and participation in workshops will assist, and be complementary to officials driving their own national process of ratifying or acceding to the ATT. To fully assist Pacific States, enhancing national regulations and legislations beyond the capabilities of these workshops, additional contributions could be made by donor States, and Pacific States themselves.

Promotion and Celebration of the Pacific Consensus on Disarmament

PSAAG will distribute information and promote the Pacific consensus on disarmament through social media and its international partners. PSAAG can also provide links for officials to resources and assistance.

Publication

Towards the end of the initiative, PSAAG could compile a Lessons Learnt and Case Study report – promoting the good work of the Pacific region and outlining lessons which could be shared with other regions. The publication would promote the success and advancement of the Pacific consensus on disarmament while providing leadership example to other regions through recommendations. The publication would be shared with international partners of PSAAG – Control Arms, IANSA, Global Action Against Violence, and Small Arms Survey along with regional bodies – the African Union, the Arab League, the European Union and others. The publication would also be distributed to all Permanent Missions at the UN and use the Conference of State Parties as a further forum for distribution. This activity of the initiative is an optional activity to promote the great work of the Pacific region and could be made possible through a small contribution of \$10,000 by 1 or more PIF Members, the UN or other donor States.

**ACTIVITY AND TIMELINE OF PLAN**

MONTH	STATES ALREADY RATIFIED TREATY	STATES SIGNED BUT NOT RATIFIED TREATY	STATES NOT SIGNED OR RATIFIED TREATY	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS - PSAAG/PIF
SEPTEMBER 2015 – AT PIF ANNUAL MEETING	Commit to supporting and building other Member States in ratifying/acceding to the ATT	Commit to depositing instrument of ratification of the Treaty within the year – ideally by March 2016	Commit to depositing instrument of accession to the Treaty by end of 2016, ideally by March 2016.	Promote commitment to a Pacific Consensus on Disarmament
As a region, commit to advancing and promoting the Pacific's Consensus on Disarmament				
BY END OF 2015	Submit ATT Baseline Assessment if have not already.  Assist/Review in the development of action plans if requested.	Develop an action plan for ratification of the ATT.	Develop an action plan for accession to the ATT.	Provide technical assistance to State upon request.  Review plans of action upon request.  PSAAG to hold sub-regional workshop and national workshops open to participation by government officials.
MARCH 2016	Continue to assist States who request technical support .	Have deposited the instrument of ratification to the UN.  Submit ATT Baseline Assessment if not already done.	Begin the implementation of action plan towards accession to the ATT – including necessary parliamentary discussions.  If possible deposit instrument of accession at the UN.	Provide technical assistance to States upon request.  PSAAG to host remaining workshops under UNSCAR grant. *If additional workshops or capacity sessions are required, funding must be sought.  Promote the Pacific Consensus on Disarmament.

			Submit ATT Baseline Assessment if have not already.	
MAY 2016	Submit annual report on the ATT	If ratified, submit annual report on the ATT	If accede to the ATT, submit annual report on the ATT	Continue to provide technical assistance upon request.  Provide Member States with a Pacific consensus on Disarmament Status Report.  Promote the Pacific Consensus on Disarmament.
SEPTEMBER 2016	Review national implementation of the ATT.  Review process of action plans.	Review national action plan on the ratification of ATT.	Review national action plan on the accession of the ATT.	Provide a Regional Review on the consensus on Disarmament.  Promote the Pacific Consensus on Disarmament.
As a region, review the advancement of the Pacific Consensus on Disarmament				
END OF 2016	States have submitted an ATT Baseline Assessment and their first Annual Report.	States have deposited an instrument of ratification to the UN and submitted an ATT Baseline Assessment.	States have deposited an instrument of accession to the UN and submitted an ATT Baseline Assessment.	Compile and distribute Lessons Learnt and Case Study Report.

#### RISK AND SUSTAINABILITY EVALUATION

RISK	CONTINGENCY PLAN
There is a moderate risk that there will be competing priorities for Pacific government attention and that arms control issues will be a low priority on Pacific agendas.	PSAAG will address this through linking the ATT to Pacific experiences and priorities. This will involve working with key allies such as the Pacific Islands Forum. It will also involve linking into security sector reform processes currently occurring in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and in Fiji.
There is a moderate risk that Pacific governments will have low capacity for implementation of the ATT which would impede PSAAG's plans.	PSAAG will seek to link Pacific governments to available resources at the regional and international level. Additionally, PSAAG will build expertise and issues champions for ATT ratification and implementation in order to mitigate this risk.

For sustainability of the initiative, PSAAG in partnership with PIF, would provide materials and open participation in workshops to selected officials. Through the provision of materials and workshops officials will gain knowledge and understanding of the synergies between their work and the ATT. By increasing knowledge, awareness and understanding, officials are better equipped to create and drive national action plans and generate support within their government to follow the required processes to ratify or accede to the Arms Trade Treaty. Each government will identify gaps in their current policy and use this to guide the process of integrating the ATT requirements into their regulations and legislation. This provides a socio-economic benefit as it enhances and reinforces the political system while the commitment ensures that political institutions uphold their responsibilities and carry out their key tasks effectively.