

By Ian Godden, Secretary of the Defence Industries Council (DIC)

The Defence Industries Council is seeking to highlight the real face of the defence industry and its ethical business practices in front of potential critics at the Liberal Democrat Party conference.

As well as promoting ethical business practices across the sector, the UK defence industry is also driving the agenda - in partnership with the Government - to achieve a new global Arms Trade Treaty that seeks to institute a globally-agreed export control regime to prevent weapons reaching areas covered by arms embargoes.

The defence industry has made a great deal of progress in recent years and now sets an example for other industries to follow when it comes to ethical practices. Common Industry Standards on ethics have been agreed by the relevant trade associations across Europe and are now being rolled out amongst their member companies. The standards are publicly available for review and a toolkit has been developed to assist smaller companies who may not have access to the technical advice that larger firms can deploy. The toolkit was written in partnership with Transparency International and I urge businesses from any industry to consult them because many of the principles within the toolkit are applicable to all firms.

Some within the Liberal Democrats have been very vocal about ethics in the defence industry - talking down an industry that delivers over 300,000 jobs, has developed an exemplary, voluntary code of ethics and was the world leader in global defence exports in 2007. We look forward to showing the party - and anyone else who will listen - that their perception of our industry is not reflected in reality given the great strides that the industry has taken to develop and promote ethical business policies.