

**For immediate release**

## **States vote overwhelmingly for ground-breaking Arms Trade Treaty**

*Governments called on to immediately start the signing and ratification process*

**New York:** Campaigners today say the vote for the first ever global treaty to regulate the international arms trade marks ‘*an incredible moment*’ signaling the dawn of a new era. The Control Arms coalition says the landmark vote sends a clear signal to gunrunners and human rights abusers that their time is up.

After six years of diplomatic negotiations, and more than 10 years of campaigning from civil society, governments at the United Nations voted for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) by a resounding majority (154 votes YES – 3 votes NO, 23 Abstentions). The treaty enshrines in new international law a set of clear rules for all global transfers of weapons and ammunitions.

The vote at the UN General Assembly was held just five days after Iran, North Korea and Syria blocked the Treaty’s adoption by consensus in a nail-biting session on the last day of the Final Conference on the ATT.

The Treaty will create binding obligations for governments to assess all arms transfers to ensure that weapons will not be used for human rights abuses, terrorism, transnational organised crime or violations of humanitarian law. It will require governments to refuse any transfers of weapons if there is a risk countries would use them to violate human rights or commit war crimes.

**Anna Macdonald, Oxfam’s Head of Arms Control**, said: *“This is an incredible moment. For the first time ever, we have a legally binding international treaty that will regulate the world’s deadliest business, the arms trade. The agreement of the Arms Trade Treaty sends a clear message to arms dealers who supply war lords and dictators that their time is up. They will no longer be able to operate and arm themselves with impunity. The world will be watching and will hold them accountable.*

*“It is right that after consensus was blocked, states moved swiftly to adopt the treaty by voting. It is right that the will of the majority wins out, not the tiny minority of sceptics who were intent on wrecking the process.*

*“From the streets of Latin America, to the camps in eastern Congo, to the valleys of Afghanistan, communities living in fear of attacks because of the unregulated arms trade can now hope for a safer future. The world will be a more secure place to live once the Treaty is in place.”*

The Control Arms coalition, which represents more than 100 civil society groups active in 120 countries, is calling on all states to prioritise signing and ratifying the treaty. The coalition said that all governments must commit to passing the necessary national legislation in order to bring the treaty into force as soon as possible.

**Allison Pytlak, Campaign Manager of Control Arms**, says: *“A huge majority of governments stated this week that they are committed to making sure that weapons stop ending up in the hands of warlords and human rights abusers. At last, the murky world of arms dealing has*



*come under the spotlight of the international community.”*

The Control Arms coalition says it is imperative that all those governments who voted in favour of the treaty must demonstrate their commitment to setting the highest possible international standards in their implementation of the treaty. For example, governments can start by including all conventional arms in their national control lists and by making it explicit that they will always refuse arms transfers when there is a substantial risk of human rights and humanitarian law violations.

**Baffour Amoa, President of the West African Action Network on Small Arms**, says: *“This treaty is long overdue. Too much blood has been spilt in Africa through armed violence fuelled by the flood of weapons into our continent. States now need to put the necessary resources towards ensuring effective implementation which will enhance peace and security across Africa, and lead to accelerated development.”*

The Control Arms coalition has been campaigning for over a decade for a robust ATT. The vote at the UN General Assembly culminates years of hard work for civil society, which has played a central role in initiating the process to have a diplomatic conference to regulate the sales of conventional weapons.

**Alex Galvez, a survivor of armed violence and Executive Director of the Transitions Foundation of Guatemala**: *“This is a good day for armed violence survivors everywhere, and a proud day for the Control Arms Campaign. But the work doesn’t stop here. We have to make sure that this Treaty actually makes a difference on the ground. States must move to ratify the ATT now, and make its swift implementation a top priority.”*

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