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Governments sign historic global treaty to regulate the \$85bn arms trade

Millions of lives to be protected as poorly regulated arms trade is brought under control

History will be made today at the United Nations as many governments sign an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) designed to protect millions living in daily fear of armed violence and at risk of rape, assault, displacement and death. More than 500,000 people are killed by armed violence every year.

The Arms Trade Treaty, the first internationally-binding agreement to regulate the \$85bn annual trade in arms and ammunition, will be signed by many of the world's top arms exporters including the UK, Germany and France alongside emerging exporters such as Brazil and Mexico. The United States Government is expected to sign later this year.

Eight of the most violence-affected countries in the world will also sign, making it more difficult for illicit arms to cross their borders. Conflict-wracked countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan will lead the way in endorsing the Treaty in an effort to protect millions of people displaced from their homes due to armed violence.

The Control Arms Coalition, representing more than 100 civil society groups, who have campaigned for a decade for the treaty said those who sign today should immediately adhere to its standards. This will mean conducting full risk assessments on each arms transfer before it takes place, with governments being required to assess the risk of weapons or ammunition falling into the wrong hands or be used to commit human rights violations.

Anna Macdonald, Head of Arms Control, Oxfam said:

“The signing of the Arms Trade Treaty gives hope to the millions affected by armed violence every day. Gunrunners and dictators have been sent a clear message that their time of easy access to weapons is up. For generations the arms trade has been shrouded in secrecy but from now on it will be open to scrutiny.

“The devastating humanitarian consequences of the current conflict in Syria underline just how urgently regulation of the arms trade is needed.

“This treaty now makes governments take responsibility for every arms transfer that enters or leaves their territory, and requires they put human rights and humanitarian law, not profit, at the heart of every decision. Too many lives have been lost to armed violence – today’s ceremony marks a new dawn.” Allison Pytlak, Campaign Manager for Control Arms, said:

“Today a powerful global standard is being created. The ATT establishes new international law, which will affect the behaviour of all states, including non-signatories such as Russia and China. We have seen from the success of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions how the creation of new international standards is a powerful deterrent, even for those who do not immediately sign.”

Baffour Amoa, President of West African Action Network on Small Arms said:

“States that have championed the treaty for close to a decade need to show leadership by signing and ratifying the treaty as quickly as possible. We urge all countries to pass national law that will enforce the treaty.

“Today, the first day of the treaty becoming a reality takes us one step closer to tackling attacks against civilians and sexual violence in Africa, including eastern Congo, where millions have seen their lives torn apart by conflict.”

On 2 April 2013, after a decade of campaigning by activists, the United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in favour of a treaty that will for the first time regulate the international transfer of weapons and ammunition.

When the campaign for an Arms Trade Treaty was first launched by the Control Arms campaign more than a decade ago, only three countries – Mali, Costa Rica and Cambodia – supported the treaty. It took 10 years of dogged pressure by campaigners around the world to persuade more than 150 countries to adopt a legally-binding agreement on the most dangerous commodities in the world.

Notes to editors

1. For interviews with spokespeople, including ATT experts and survivors of violence contact:

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2. The Arms Trade Treaty was adopted by majority vote at the General Assembly on 3 April. Three States voted against – Iran, Syria and North Korea, 156 states voted for and 22 abstained.

3. The treaty will come into force 90 days after the 50th signatory state has completed the ratification process. The Control Arms Coalition is calling on states to urgently prioritise signing and ratifying as soon as possible.

4. The global arms market was valued at \$85.3 billion in 2011 (Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2004-2011, Richard F. Grimmett).

5. Jamaica, Colombia, Guatemala, Swaziland, South Africa, South Sudan (then included as part of Sudan), DRC and Brazil are all in the top 20 countries when ranked by violent death rate per 100,000 population, 2004–09 (The Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011, The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development).

6. By signing the treaty states commit to:

- Properly regulate all transfers of conventional arms, ammunition or parts and components.
- Ban the export of conventional arms, ammunition, or parts and components where there is knowledge the weapons would be used to perpetrate war crimes, genocide, attacks against civilians, and other grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.
- Comprehensively assess the risk of any transfer to contribute to or undermine peace and security or to facilitate serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, terrorism, organised crime, gender-based violence or violence against women and children.
- Consider the risk that arms might be re-directed from the original recipient to another user – known as “diversion”.



- Submit annual reports on its international transfers and national implementation activities to the other States Parties, improving transparency in the global arms trade.