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US Government Signs Arms Trade Treaty - Over 100 countries have now signed the historic agreement

New York, NY - The Control Arms Coalition welcomed today's signing of the Arms Trade Treaty by the United States. As the world's biggest arms exporter, the United States joins more than half of UN member states who have already signed the treaty. So far, 89 have joined the treaty, only 4 months since the treaty opened for signature, and this number is expected to rise to over 100 by the end of the day.

The coalition, which has over 100 member organisations around the world, urged the US to now live up to the spirit of the treaty by not authorizing any transfer of weapons where there is a major risk of international human rights and humanitarian law, such as in the current conflict in Syria.

The Arms Trade Treaty is the first ever multilateral treaty on the global trade in conventional arms and ammunition, requiring governments to establish common standards for the international trade of weapons. It is the first ever global answer to the inadequate patchwork system of national laws, regional initiatives, and country-specific embargoes that have failed to effectively control the world's deadliest trade up to now.

A group of over a dozen countries signed the Arms Trade Treaty in New York at a ceremony on the margin of the UN General Assembly. Recent signatories to the Treaty have included Colombia, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa.

"Today's signing of the Arms Trade Treaty by the United States is a significant victory for human rights and development," said Raymond C. Offenheiser, president of Oxfam America. "The US is the world's foremost arms exporter, and US signature is a powerful step demonstrating the United States' commitment to preventing mass atrocities and protecting civilians from armed conflict."

Speaking at a High-Level meeting on the Arms Trade Treaty later, Oxfam International Executive Director Winnie Byanyima:

"The most powerful argument for the Arms Trade Treaty continues to be the call of the millions who have suffered from armed violence around the world. No-where is the need for an effective treaty so apparent as in the devastating humanitarian crisis in Syria. More than two years of war has killed more than 100,000 people and over seven million are in dire need of humanitarian aid. The Arms Trade Treaty will not reverse history in Syria but the past shows us that it can prevent the fuelling of future conflicts."

The Treaty creates binding obligations for governments to assess all arms transfers against the risk that weapons will be used for human rights abuses, terrorism, transnational organized crime or violations of humanitarian law. It will require governments to refuse any transfers of weapons if there is a major risk countries would use them to violate human rights or commit war crimes.

Allison Pytlak of the Control Arms Coalition said: "Just three months after opening for signature, more than 100 governments have signed this groundbreaking agreement and many are making progress toward ratifying it. Today is a tremendous milestone. We urge all countries to take their obligations seriously and pass national laws that will enforce the Treaty and transform the words on the page into action on the ground. Control Arms will continue to advocate for the Treaty's universalization but also



stands ready to monitor and assist with implementation.”

Control Arms now calls on the more than 100 countries who have signed the ATT to swiftly to incorporate the agreement into their national law and ratify the text. The treaty, which was agreed in April by an overwhelming majority of the UN membership, will become international law after 50 countries ratify the text.

“It is not enough to sign the treaty. Governments must take their role of implementing it very seriously. This is a text about saving lives and transforming the way the arms trade operates. It will require changes in legislation, and even more importantly, changes in behavior,” said Saferworld’s Roy Isbister.

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