

Top arms exporters ratify Arms Trade Treaty

Global coalition of campaigners call on France to heed Treaty obligations and reassess sale of warships to Russia

Arms deals from five of the world's top 10 exporters are set to be bound by international law preventing irresponsible weapons trading, following an event at the United Nations in New York today.

Exactly one year since the pioneering Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was passed by the UN General Assembly, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK today joined with 18 other states in ratifying the ATT.

Already 118 states have taken the preliminary step of signing the ATT. Today's event brings the total number to have ratified to 31 - more than half the 50 needed for the Treaty to enter into force.

The Control Arms Coalition, the global network representing more than 100 civil society groups campaigning for a robust and rapid implementation of the ATT, today urged even more states to ratify as soon as possible and make the Treaty a reality on the ground.

Anna Macdonald, Head of Arms Control at Oxfam said: "Today's ratifications are a huge step forward, making it harder for gun runners, dictators and human rights abusers to get hold of the weapons they use to cause such suffering. It's great to see so many countries leading the race to 50 and we urge others who have already signed to follow suit and ratify the Treaty without delay. For those whose daily lives are devastated by these weapons there really is no more time to lose."

The ATT is the first internationally-binding agreement to regulate the \$85bn annual trade in arms and ammunition. More than 520,000 people are killed every year by armed violence and millions more live in fear of rape, assault and displacement caused by weapons getting into the wrong hands.

In addition to top weapons exporters France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, the other states ratifying the ATT at today's event are Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, El Salvador, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Having ratified the ATT, states need to apply its rules in practice. Control Arms is therefore calling on France to reassess its planned sale of two warships to Russia – a country recently criticised for breaching international law by the global community and even by President Francois Hollande himself.

The subject of the deal – two Mistral class amphibious assault ships - are designed to carry helicopters, armoured vehicles including tanks, and 450 soldiers. Currently being built in the eastern French port of Saint-Nazere, they will significantly enhance Russia's naval military capability. The first ship is due to be delivered to Russia in autumn 2014.

The offensive dangers represented by such ships are clear. When the sale was first discussed in 2008 the Head of the Russian Navy, Commander Vladimir Vysotsky, was widely reported as saying his forces would have been victorious in Georgia "in just 40 minutes" if Russia had had the use of Mistral warships.



Allison Pytlak, Campaign Manager for the Control Arms Coalition said: “These ships are powerful war machines designed to boost capacity to attack by sea or air. Given Russia’s recent actions in the Crimea, as well as their highly-controversial military attack on Georgia in 2008, there has to be a risk that these weapons could be used in breach of the ATT. The French Government must make sure it asks the right questions before this sale goes ahead and that it does not risk breaching any of its Treaty obligations.”

El Salvador, where conflict and a proliferation of weapons has seen thousands of ordinary people living in fear of violence for decades, also ratified the ATT today.

Control Arms campaigner from El Salvador Jesús Martínez, Executive Director of Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes and landmine survivor said: "As survivor and campaigner I am happy that my country El Salvador has taken this important step of ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty today. I'm sure that the new government here will make every effort to implement the Treaty. Encouraging the new authorities to do so will be my commitment as a campaigner going forward."

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Notes to editors

- On 2 April 2013 the ATT was adopted by majority vote at the General Assembly. Three States voted against – Iran, Syria and North Korea, 154 states voted for and 22 abstained.
- The ATT will come into force 90 days after the 50th signatory state deposits its instrument of ratification with the UN.
- France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK are listed as five of the top 10 global arms exporters 2008 – 2012 by the Stockholm International Peace Institute (SPIRI).
- By signing the ATT 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

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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.