

Embargoed until 00:01am Thursday September 25

## **Arms Trade Treaty set to enter into force before end of year as number of ratifications tops 50**

*Argentina, St Lucia, Portugal, Senegal, and Uruguay are amongst latest states to announce ratification - triggering 90-day countdown*

Eight more states will ratify the Arms Trade Treaty today – bringing the overall total to over 50 and triggering the countdown to entry into force.

Fifty states are required to ratify the treaty before the 90-day countdown to entry into force could begin. Today, eight states including, Argentina, The Bahamas, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Czech Republic, St Lucia, Portugal, Senegal, and Uruguay will ratify at a special ceremony at the United Nations headquarters, in New York, taking the number of ratifying states to 53.

Campaigners hailed today as a historic moment and said that the first 50 states to ratify had shown political leadership and strength in ensuring the treaty will enter into force on December 24 2014 – only 18 months since it first opened for signature, in June 2013. Two more states - Georgia and Namibia - will also sign the treaty today, bringing the overall total number of signatories to 121.

Director of the Control Arms Coalition Anna Macdonald said: *“Momentum behind the Arms Trade Treaty is continuing at a rapid pace now as we approach the moment the treaty will enter into force. The ATT will enshrine into international law much-needed controls on the multi-billion-dollar arms trade for the very first time.*

*“Civilians have been paying too high a price for the lack of global arms controls which have permitted arms and ammunition to be legally transferred into the hands of dictators and warlords. But the game is up now – those days are over. Now governments have the chance to change the arms trade for good, and if rigorously implemented this treaty will save lives.”*

The ATT is the first global agreement to regulate the \$85bn annual trade in arms and ammunition.

Every day, up to 2000 people are killed by armed violence and millions more live in fear of rape, assault and displacement caused by weapons getting into the wrong hands. Figures released by the UN’s refugee agency UNHCR showed more than 50m people were forced to flee their homes across the world during 2013.

Heavy scrutiny is also on the source of weapons being used in conflicts around the globe, for example in South Sudan, Syria, Iraq and Israel/Palestine.

Growing interest is focused on where Islamic State (IS) fighters are getting their weapons, particularly because their supply appears to be fuelled by the diversion of arms and ammunition from legal custody i.e. state-owned into illicit hands. Data released earlier this month by Conflict Armament Research showed US-manufactured small arms were being used on the battlefield by IS fighters as well as Chinese-manufactured M80 general-purpose machine guns.

Under the ATT, states must assess the risks of weapons and ammunition being misused to commit human rights abuses or violations of humanitarian law, before they can authorize transfer.

Once the treaty enters into force, the next major challenge will be to ensure the treaty – which sets new international law - is implemented robustly.

Important operational questions over the implementation of the treaty have yet to be finalised and the Control Arms Coalition is calling on all States who have ratified the Treaty to make fast progress on the mechanics of how the treaty will be applied in real-life situations.

The debate continues on where the ATT's official Secretariat will be based – with the governments of Austria, Switzerland and Trinidad and Tobago all having made a bid to host it.

Campaigners say the more countries that sign and ratify the treaty, the better. In particular, they encourage African States, who played a big part in Treaty negotiations, and whose leaders have often called for a halt to the flood of weapons into the continent to ratify the ATT.

Reaching the landmark figure of 50 has been welcomed by campaigners all over the world – particularly in countries affected by armed violence and states where irresponsible weapons trading has cost lives.

Control Arms Coalition member Nounou Booto-Meeti, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, said: *“Guns are used to inspire fear, then to control and then to kill. This pattern of violence sickens me and I have seen too many lives devastated across Africa by armed violence.*

*“Tight regulations control the international trade of agricultural produce but, until now, weapons and bullets could be transferred from across borders with few questions asked.*

*“We have waited too long for the Arms Trade Treaty but now we have just 90 days to go before it becomes international law. We call on states to show continued commitment and determination and ensure the ATT is robustly implemented so it is used effectively to reduce violence in conflict zones all over the world.”*

Control Arms Coalition research shows the ATT is one of the fastest arms agreements to move towards entry into force. Progress on the ratification of the ATT can be compared with that of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which opened for signature in January 1993. A total of 126 states signed at that time.

Sixty five signatures were needed to trigger EIF and the 65<sup>th</sup> ratification happened almost *four* years after the convention opened for signature. By that time, there were 165 signatures.

ENDS

**Notes to editors:**

1. For more information or to arrange interviews call Allison Pytlak on

(646) 713-8985 or email [media@controlarms.org](mailto:media@controlarms.org)

2. Background:

- The ATT opened for signature on June 3 2013. Since then, 118 countries have signed
- On 2 April 2013 the ATT was adopted by majority vote at the General Assembly - 154 states voted for, three voted against and 23 abstained.
- The ATT will come into force 90 days after the 50th signatory state deposits its instrument of ratification with the UN.
- By signing the ATT states commit to:
  - o Properly regulate all transfers of conventional arms, ammunition or parts and components.
  - o 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.
  - o Comprehensively assess the risk of any transfer contributing 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.
  - o Consider the risk that arms might be re-directed from the original recipient to another user – known as “diversion”.
  - o Submit annual reports on its international transfers and national implementation activities to the other States Parties, improving transparency in the global arms trade.

3. To find out more about the Control Arms Coalition visit:

[www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)

[www.facebook.com/controlarms](http://www.facebook.com/controlarms)

@controlarms

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/controlarms/sets/72157643263427383/>

--