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Campaigners say European Governments must stop undermining tough new laws regulating the global arms trade

VIENNA: Arms control campaigners are warning that a new international treaty to regulate the \$85bn global arms trade is already being undermined – just four months after it entered into force.

Representatives from more than 90 governments and over 40 non-governmental organisations from the global Control Arms Coalition are today (MON) and tomorrow (TUES) attending the latest round of discussions about the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The meeting, hosted by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and chaired by Ambassador Jorge Lomónaco of Mexico is taking place at the Hofburg Palace, in Vienna.

Members of the Control Arms Coalition say that a robust ATT is needed now more than ever before with recent atrocities in Nigeria, Yemen, and Kenya illustrating the devastating effect of the unregulated deadly arms trade.

Abjata Khalif, from Kenya, Director of Kenya Pastoralist Journalists Network, who will be attending the meeting as part of the Control Arms Coalition, was one of the first at the scene in the immediate aftermath of the recent terrorist attacks in Garissa, Northern Kenya.

He said: *“I have seen with my own eyes the devastating horror of what happens when arms fall into the wrong hands. Literally one person was killed every minute in Garissa and I have come to Vienna because I want to tell governments this and to demand they do all they can to ensure this Treaty saves lives – rather than try to find ways around it.”*

Negotiations in Vienna will address the Treaty’s future rules of procedure and financing mechanisms. These decisions will be vital in determining the effectiveness and transparency of the Treaty, the ability of States to hold each other to account, and the support available to war-torn and impoverished countries to implement it.

Rather than working for effective Treaty implementation, Control Arms campaigners fear that Europe’s drive for “universalization” – ensuring that all States join the Treaty – is coming at the expense of robust implementation.

Anna Macdonald, Director of the Control Arms Coalition, who will also be attending the Vienna meeting, said: *“European governments are pushing for weak Rules of Procedure with limited accountability. This is a dangerous game to play – this Treaty is about saving lives and protecting people, not finding new ways to promote arms sales.”*

“Governments such as the UK and France were leaders in seeking to secure an ATT, but they are undermining the commitments they have made to reduce human suffering. They are insisting on holding meetings about the ATT behind closed doors and on decision-making processes that will introduce unnecessary and lengthy delays, thereby limiting significantly the Treaty’s ability to respond to and prevent future crises.”

The ATT, which aims to set new global rules for the international transfers of arms and ammunition, entered into force on December 24 2014.

The ATT requires all arms deals to be assessed against strict criteria, including whether the arms might be used for human rights violations or war crimes, or risk being diverted to terrorists. The treaty states that if there is a substantial risk the transfer will breach any of those criteria, then the arms transfer cannot be authorized.



This week's meeting provides a chance for governments to plan for the Treaty's first Conference of States Parties (CSP), the annual fora where states will meet to assess progress on implementation, which will take place in Mexico City, between August 24 to 27.

At this first CSP, decisions will also be made on the structure and mandate of the ATT Secretariat. The location where it will be based has yet to be decided – and Vienna is one of three cities, along with Geneva and Port of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago on the shortlist.

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Notes to Editors:

1. 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.
2. The ATT is one of the fastest multi-lateral arms agreements to enter into force. There are 66 States Parties to the ATT as well as an additional 67 that have signed but not yet ratified, such as the United States. States Parties include major arms exporters such as France, the UK and Germany. Austria ratified the Treaty in June 2014.
3. The Control Arms Coalition is a global civil society movement that was a driving force in the decade-long campaign for an ATT, and is now advocating for effective Treaty implementation. Control Arms represents over 300 organisations, working in 120 countries. It includes major international NGOs such as Oxfam, Amnesty International and Saferworld, as well as many regional and national-level organisations.
4. Control Arms Director Anna Macdonald and Kenyan activist Abjata Khalif will be attending the conference in Vienna and are available for interview and background briefings in English:

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Other Control Arms representatives present in Vienna are also available for interview in French and Spanish.