

## **Arms trade must be dragged out of the shadows with creation of strong new measures in Cancun this week**

***Government of Mexico, a champion of the Arms Trade Treaty for many years, could play a critical role in ensuring robust implementation which will save lives***

The first Conference of States Parties for the Arms Trade Treaty, which opens in Cancun tomorrow (MON), offers a real opportunity to introduce tough new regulations which will shine a light on the global arms trade - and could save the lives of millions of people, according to campaigners from the Control Arms Coalition.

Representatives from 72 States Parties and 59 signatories of the Treaty, including major arms exporters such as the US, France and the UK, are meeting to make practical decisions on how the new treaty, which entered into force in December 2014 and is the first to regulate the \$100bn global arms trade, will be implemented.

Critical issues to be discussed will include the important matter of reporting – and how transparent future arms deals will be.

But campaigners fear negotiators attending the four-day meeting may fail to maximise the chance to create the highest standards which will ensure the ATT will be robustly implemented. They are urging the Government of Mexico, the chair of the conference and a major player over many years of negotiations of the ATT at the United Nations, to take a tough approach in Cancun.

Control Arms Director Anna Macdonald said: *“No one should forget the horror that armed violence is causing around the world. Every year, millions of ordinary people have their lives devastated by conflict in war-torn countries such as Yemen and South Sudan as well as in areas of high armed violence such as Latin America and the Caribbean.*

*“Decisions taken in Cancun will dictate how the treaty is implemented for decades to come. The Government of Mexico has championed the ATT for many years and the CSP provides an important moment to hold other states to the highest standards.*

*“Full and open reporting is vital and must mean that anyone importing or exporting arms should publicly declare it. There must be no room for secrets.”*

Under the Treaty, before an arms transfer can be authorised, it must be assessed against strict criteria, including whether the arms might be used for human rights violations or war crimes. If there is a substantial risk the transfer will breach any of those criteria, then the arms transfer cannot be authorized.

Control Arms wants to see the proposed reporting template become more detailed and comprehensive so that it will require open and transparent reporting of all future cross-border transfers of arms and ammunition.

Discussions will also focus on the structure and location of the ATT Secretariat – with Geneva, Switzerland, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vienna, Austria, on the shortlist. States will need also to agree a financing mechanism that will ensure war-torn and impoverished states will have the resources to implement the treaty.

Alex Galvez, founder and Executive Director of Transitions, in Guatemala, will speak at the opening High-Level Event at the CSP, tomorrow (MON).

He said: *“Every day I pay the price for armed violence by living with a disability. When I was a teenager, I was shot and seriously injured during an armed robbery in a shop. It’s been a long road to recovery.”*

*“My country has one of the highest rates of armed violence in the world and guns are too readily available. What happened to me should never be allowed to happen to anyone again. This Treaty is not just a piece of paper – it has the potential to save lives. I call on diplomats in Cancun to remember that this Treaty is about real people and real lives, and not to throw away the chance to make sure the ATT makes a difference.”*

In Mexico, armed violence has caused 80,000 deaths in the last five years. Mexican NGOs are also urging the government to prioritise its obligations as an importer, for example by providing end-user documentation to exporters. Such actions could prevent legally-imported arms and ammunition from being diverted into the hands of criminals in Mexico.

Paulina Arriaga, from Desarma México, said that *“In Mexico, in the last nine years, police forces have reported more than 17,000 firearms as lost or stolen. These, firearms entered the country legally, and now we don’t even know where they are – let alone how they are being used.”*

Sara San Martin, from the Centro de Estudios EcuMénicos and a campaigner for the World Council of Churches, said: *“In Mexico, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has had devastating consequences and claimed thousands of lives over the years. Increased transparency in reporting at the moment when arms and ammunition are initially imported will help the government to keep better track of them, preventing them from being diverted and falling into the wrong hands with horrific consequences.”*

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. For more information or to arrange interviews contact Paulina Arriaga on (55) 2359 8115 or Zahra Akkerhuys on +44 7525 901932 or email [media@controlarms.org](mailto:media@controlarms.org)

2. The Control Arms Coalition is a global civil society movement of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) campaigning for tough controls on the international arms trade. Control Arms represents organisations working in over 120 countries. It includes major international NGOs such as Oxfam, Amnesty International and Saferworld, as well as many regional and national level organisations.

3. In the Americas, Argentina, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay Uruguay have ratified the ATT, while Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, US are all signatories.

For a complete list of ATT ratifiers and signatories check here:  
<http://controlarms.org/en/universalization-tracker/>