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Arms Trade Treaty Signing Ceremony, 3 June 2013

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

10 years ago I and many others who are here today, came together to launch the Control Arms campaign with colleagues around the world in 70 countries. Our message was simple: the arms trade is out of control and ordinary people around the world are suffering at the rate of one death every minute, with millions more forced from their homes, suffering abuse and impoverishment.

We had an idea. We had a vision. A global treaty to bring the conventional arms trade under control. To make governments take responsibility for every arms transfer that enters or leaves their territory. And to put human rights and humanitarian law, not profit, at the heart of every decision.

And its been a long road to get here. But here we are – 10 years on and with an Arms Trade Treaty adopted at the UN by overwhelming majority vote. It's a success for us all. For the UN, for governments and for civil society.

There have been many stages in this process since work started in the UN in 2006, and we've kept the pressure on throughout – UN consultations, open-ended working groups, groups of government experts, preparatory committees, regional meetings, resolutions every year at the General Assembly to move things forward. We've driven tanks round London, ridden camels in Mali and rowed dragon boats in Cambodia to raise awareness. We've run workshops and seminars in 100 countries to deepen knowledge and explore ideas. We've given media interviews and written articles to communicate. And we've analysed papers, suggested treaty text, and worked hours into the night to turn a weak text into a stronger text.

The world has come together and said "Enough!"

To unscrupulous arms dealers, dictators and human rights abusers, we have

a clear message. Your days of easy access to weapons and ammunition are over. The world is watching, and the world will hold you to account.

The most powerful argument for the ATT has always been the call of the millions who have suffered from armed violence around the world. Survivors of armed violence, representatives of whom are here today, have played a major part in this campaign. Their suffering and experiences are the reason we are all here, and their courage and determination has been the inspiration to keep pursuing this goal.

So now we have the words on the paper. We need the action on the ground. Because this is a treaty about saving peoples lives.

The treaty is not perfect, but it is definitely a treaty worth signing. It is positive that the ATT covers not just a wide range of weapons, but also their parts and components and ammunition. That there is a clear prohibition on arms transfers where war crimes will take place, and a comprehensive risk assessment in all other cases. Governments must assess the risk of violations of human rights and humanitarian law before authorizing any transfer. The treaty can reduce human suffering, promote development and help tackle the inescapable link between poverty and armed violence.

But if the treaty is to achieve its potential, the work of Implementation must begin in earnest. You must show that you are serious about making this treaty work effectively. 50 ratifications are needed for the ATT to enter into force. This can be done in less than two years, if we all make it a priority. Then it will be up to states to implement the treaty to the highest possible standards. And of course civil society will be there to help make this happen.

Working in partnership with government is not always easy – for NGOs or governments – but this has been an important part of progress on this treaty, without which we would not have had success.

I would like to thank the many officials who worked with us to secure the strongest possible treaty, it has been a relay race with many contributors and we recognize those who started the process at the UN, those who helped close the deal, and those who were there throughout.

Change does not happen only in the UN or parliaments. Change happens when we work together on a shared goal and put aside our differences for a common good. Change happens from workplaces, from schools, from universities, and from our own homes, when we refuse to take no for an answer, and keep going. Because when there is an idea worth fighting for, then set-backs along the way are not defeat, and differences in opinion are opportunities to build from.

So all around the world who have supported this campaign - thank you for all you have done. This has been a global movement and you have all contributed.

Thank you for making this happen.