



Iran, Syrian and DPRK stall adoption of Arms Trade Treaty

Campaigners expressed their 'immense frustration' with the consensus process after Syria, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea blocked agreement today of the Arms Trade Treaty. Despite a courageous last minute attempt by Mexico, Japan and several countries to save the process, the President of the Conference reached a conclusion that consensus could not be achieved.

The Control Arms Coalition says the historic treaty is still within reach but that the consensus process had delayed proceedings again today when a handful of sceptical states used their veto power against the huge majority of states, who want to see the treaty pass.

Kenya read a statement on behalf of 12 states, calling for the UN General Assembly to adopt the Treaty by vote as soon as possible. The earliest this can happen is 2 April, next Tuesday, when the President of the Conference, Ambassador Peter Woolcott, will be presenting his report.

It is widely anticipated the treaty would then pass by majority enshrining in international law for the first time ever a set of rules to regulate the global arms trade.

Anna Macdonald, Oxfam's Head of Arms Control, said: "The world has been held hostage by three states. We have known all along that the consensus process was deeply flawed and today we see it is actually dysfunctional. Countries such as Iran, Syria and DPRK should not be allowed to dictate to the rest of the world how the sale of weapons should be regulated.

"We are not downhearted. This treaty will become a reality – it's just a matter of time. We believe the fight to for an Arms Trade Treaty is almost over and we hope we are close to the start of a new era. We have a clear message for human rights abusers and gunrunners – your time is nearly up."

The Control Arms Coalition has broadly welcomed the new draft text though they have criticised areas where there are still gaps in crucial areas. The campaigners are concerned the list of weapons to be covered under the draft text is still too narrow and the criteria by which governments will assess whether to authorize an arms transfer is ambiguous. The coalition is calling on states to see the treaty as a starting point, which sets new international standards. Once passed, they want to see states aim high in their implementation plans and to sign and ratify the treaty as soon as possible.

Control Arms Campaign Manager Allison Pytlak said: “Of course we are disappointed. Lives are lost each day because there is currently such poor regulation of the arms trade.

“It’s been a long hard road to get to this point but almost all states believe now is the time for a treaty. Agreeing a treaty such as this is a challenge but states are nearly there now. Once the treaty has been passed, the real work of implementing it will start and only then will it actually change people’s lives on the ground.”

Baffour Amoa, President of the West African Action Network on Small Arms, said: “This is a strong disappointment for Africa. An Arms Trade Treaty is long overdue. Too much blood has been spilt in Africa through armed violence that could have been avoided.

“We can no longer afford a world where the sale in conventional arms remains unregulated. The fight goes on.”