

Anna Macdonald, Control Arms Coalition
Arms Trade Treaty ratification event
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Mr Deputy Secretary General, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

I am proud to speak today on behalf of the Control Arms Coalition, the global movement of civil society organisations that has long campaigned for an effective Arms Trade Treaty. Every day our partners around the world deal with the devastating results of an arms trade that is out of control. Armed violence destroys lives and it destroys hope.

It has taken more than a decade of determined campaigning to help turn the impossible into the possible, an Arms Trade Treaty in existence, and a world that has come together and said enough is enough, it is time for change. A global treaty to regulate this \$85bn annual trade in arms and ammunition. More than 520,000 people are killed every year by armed violence and millions more live in fear of rape, assault and displacement caused by weapons getting into the wrong hands.

Let us all remember that the purpose of this treaty is to save and protect lives. It is a humanitarian objective that has driven the ATT, and this aim must remain as our collective goal as we move from ratifying the treaty, into the next important stage of ensuring its effective implementation. The ATT can reduce human suffering, promote development and help tackle the inescapable link between poverty and armed violence. It can help reduce the suffering that women and children in particular experience during armed conflict.

The most powerful argument for the ATT continues to be the call of the millions who have suffered from armed violence around the world.

No-where is the need for an effective treaty so apparent as in the devastating humanitarian crisis in Syria. More than three years of war has killed over 150,000 people and over nine million are in dire need of humanitarian aid. The number of deaths and refugees has climbed as the fighting has intensified and spread. The conflict has been fuelled by transfers of arms, munitions and ammunition from outside parties. The world has been focused on the vital work of reinforcing the norm against the use of chemical weapons. It is just as vital to reinforce the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law that are at the heart of the ATT, and ensure that there are no further transfers of arms to any warring party in Syria, or indeed to any conflict zone where there is a high risk of misuse.

It is extremely positive that more than half of UN member states have now signed the treaty, and that now today 18 more have ratified. It is also extremely positive that 5 of the world's biggest arms exporters are among those ratifying today.

Now let us aim for the next anniversary. The 3rd of June, in two months time will mark one year since the ATT opened for signature. What better time than to also be the point at which 50 ratifications are reached. We call on all those governments who have signed the treaty but not yet ratified, to urgently get their legislation in place so that they can be there on 3 June to deposit their instrument of ratification. We call on all others to follow as swiftly as possible.

But it is still not enough to sign and ratify the treaty. Governments must take their role of implementing the ATT very seriously. This is a treaty about saving lives, preventing harm and transforming the way the arms trade operates. It will require changes in legislation, and even more importantly, it must achieve changes in behavior.

There is no government that can rest back now and say – what we do is ok, it is everyone else that must change. This cannot be business as usual.

All of the governments ratifying here today can also act to show that these are not just words on paper, and a photo in the press. This is about change and opportunity.

You can change the arms trade and really make a difference to the millions of men, women and children who suffer from armed violence and conflict every day. You have the opportunity now to lead by example.

All governments are responsible for the arms trade, and all governments need to act to ensure it is brought under control. States must rigorously assess all arms and ammunition transfers, whether they are leaving, entering, or passing through their territory. They must apply the treaty's criteria robustly, and deny arms transfers where there is a substantial risk that they will be used for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including gender based violence. The risks of diversion to illicit users must also be thoroughly assessed, as must the risks of corrupt practices.

Some states will need assistance to be able to implement the treaty, and to set up the necessary national export control regimes. Better resourced governments must support those with less means, both financially and with technical assistance.

Civil society will be extremely important in this next phase, not least by helping to ensure effective monitoring of implementation. To this end we will establish an ATT monitoring mechanism, with publications and online resources available to all. Our ATT Legal network will continue to give support to delegations engaged in ratification, and our many member organisations throughout the world will continue to support at a national level, as well as to hold governments to account.

We are committed to working with governments and UN agencies to support the treaty implementation. Together we worked to make this treaty become a reality. It was not an easy task, and it required great tenacity and perseverance. The next phase will be equally challenging, but we must rise to it together. It is too important not to.