



Third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty Geneva, Switzerland, 11 - 15 September 2017

Overview

The third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (CSP 2017) was ultimately frustrating for all those hoping that governments would use this opportunity to acknowledge and address arms transfers of concern, and take meaningful action to reduce human suffering. The important moments of substance that did emerge during the conference struggled for attention as diplomats again largely preferred to focus on procedural matters.

Throughout the conference, Control Arms urged ATT States Parties to remember the Treaty's core purpose, to '[Reduce Human Suffering](#).' However the silence from governments, in particular on [Yemen](#), was deafening. Even though 106 countries attended CSP 2017, only Costa Rica explicitly mentioned Yemen by name during the meeting. The war in Yemen is now in its third year, and the country has been bombed to the brink of [famine](#).

The conference did see a few important moments. For the first time during the formal debate, a group of states invoked Article 6 & 7 of the ATT and drew attention to problematic arms transfers. Mexico delivered a statement on behalf of 12 countries to request that all ATT States Parties and others "abstain from transferring arms to Venezuela until peace has reached the country.'

Mexico in its own national statement also welcomed the work done by civil society to stigmatize illegitimate arms transfers, while Chile said that it shared the concerns of civil society regarding transfers that violated the ATT.

Transparency was the second major advocacy priority for Control Arms at CSP 2017, and it was the theme of this year's [ATT Monitor](#) Annual Report. So far, both the quantity and quality of received reports have been disappointing. For example, only 64 per cent of ATT Annual Reports for 2016 had been submitted by the time CSP 2017 began, and three governments (Liberia, Panama and Senegal) had kept their reports private. After Control Arms [highlighted these secret reports](#) in its intervention however, Senegal requested that their report be made public.

CSP 2017 was the first ATT conference to include a special thematic debate, which this year was focused on the links between the ATT and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Control Arms has been calling for States Parties to [look beyond SDG Target 16.4](#) (on reducing illicit arms flows) as the most obvious link, and it was positive to see many states emphasise in particular the link between the ATT's provisions on preventing gender-based violence, and SDG 5.2 (eliminate violence against women and girls). However it was disappointing that there were few practical measures identified for ongoing work. This issue will continue to be a focus of the three working groups (Effective Treaty Implementation, Universalization, Transparency and Reporting) in the coming year.

The last minutes of the conference surprisingly saw the most energised debate between governments, as states struggled to adopt the final conference report because of a dispute over the terms of reference for the three working groups. Even though the principle at stake was important, affecting the transparency and participation of Working Group meetings, the sense remaining was that ATT States Parties remain entrenched in battles over the process and mechanics of the Treaty, rather than moving on to directly addressing arms transfer to conflict parties and rights abusers.

Ambassador Takimazawi of Japan will be the new President of CSP 2018, and will likely hold the Fourth Conference of States Parties in Japan, on 22-24 August 2018.

- Read the [official conference report](#) here.
- Read the Control Arms [Press Release](#) from the end of CSP 2017.

Detailed Summary Report

High Level Segment and General Debate

CSP 2017 was attended by representatives from a total of 79 ATT States Parties, 23 Signatories, and four Observer states.

93 colleagues from 53 organisations from all regions attended with the Control Arms Coalition. Another thirteen international organisations, and 23 other representatives of civil society, academia and industry also attended the Conference.

The meeting, which was presided over by Ambassador Klaus Korhonen of Finland, opened with a High Level Segment opened by the Foreign Ministers of Finland and Switzerland. Radhya Almuwatakel, Director of Mwatana Organization for Human Rights, based in Yemen, spoke during the segment on behalf of civil society. 'You may not know much about the civilian victims or what is happening to the Yemenis enduring the daily onslaught of war.' [Radhya told delegates](#). 'Sadly, many Yemenis have come to know of your countries through the weapons that have destroyed their homes and killed their families.'

Peter Maurer, President of the [ICRC](#), reinforced Radhya's comments, telling states that '[f]ailing to control the supply chain of arms is putting a dirt-cheap price on the lives of civilians. There is an urgent need to turn words into deeds, to prevent the irreparable harm caused when weapons fall into the wrong hands.' In summing up, the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Timo Soini, noted that Yemen was concerning and said the CSP should discuss it.

Forty-nine states spoke in the general debate on Monday. Several informed the conference of **new legislation** or policies that they had recently adopted to implement the ATT (including Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Togo and Uruguay.) Many states stressed the important role of **civil society** in achieving the Treaty's object and purpose (including Belgium, Bulgaria, El Salvador, France, Ireland, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Slovenia and Zambia). Other key priorities for states included: the need to focus more on **gender-based violence** (Belgium, Ireland, Norway, Uruguay), the importance of **public reporting** (Ireland, Guatemala, Mexico, Montenegro and Romania), and to appeal for **international assistance** (Burkina Faso, Guatemala, Palau, Samoa, Sierra Leone).

Observers including Control Arms were not able to deliver [general debate](#) interventions until the afternoon of Day 3, after being rescheduled due to timing issues. Anna Macdonald delivered Control Arms statement outside the conference room instead, which was [made available online](#).

Implementation

This year's CSP was coincidentally and ironically held at the same time as the [world's largest arms fair](#) in London. ATT States Parties had the opportunity during this implementation session to directly address arms sales to users that may violate human rights and international laws, but none of the 22 speakers that took the floor seized that opportunity.

James Lynch of Amnesty International delivered a statement on behalf of Control Arms, calling for compliance discussions to be a far greater focus of ATT implementation efforts, and outlining how [irresponsible arms transfers](#) are fuelling violence and human suffering in Yemen, Egypt and the Philippines. The Philippines later exercised their right of reply to deny that government authorities were responsible for serious and systematic human rights abuses. Control Arms responded, stressing the impartiality, credibility and independence of Amnesty International's documentation of serious violation of human rights in the Philippines, and inviting the Philippines government to further dialogue.

ATT States Parties mostly focused their statements on the future work and status of the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI). Several countries (Japan, Mexico, Switzerland) suggested that Articles 6 & 7 (Prohibitions and Export Assessment) should be the key priority issue for the group to focus on next year. Other issues highlighted

included: General Implementation (UK), Transit & Transshipment (Sweden), Brokering (Ghana) and Diversion (Mexico).

Several countries provided further updates on recent national implementation efforts, including new legislation (Argentina, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Peru, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone).

Germany, the Netherlands and the EU all offered to provide international implementation assistance. The EU suggested that future CSPs should play a role in reviewing the progress of implementation efforts.

Thematic Debate: Linking the ATT and the Sustainable Development Goals

This was the first thematic debate at a Conference of States Parties. The debate began with presentations from Ambassador Stevens (Sierra Leone) Farah Karimi (Oxfam), and Dr Simona Graci (UNODC).

Ambassador Stevens walked delegates through the overlaps between the ATT and the SDGs, while Dr Graci focused on the types of data that could be collected to measure progress, and recommended that denial information be included in ATT Annual Reports to inform monitoring of efforts to reduce illicit arms flows. Ms Karimi addressed the impacts of armed violence and the supply of arms on development efforts in Yemen, Central African Republic and South Sudan.

“Does anyone sitting here who supplied arms to combatants in Yemen think that they have improved Yemen’s security and development?” Ms. Karimi asked delegates. ‘[Yemen would have always found meeting the SDGs difficult](#) but now, goals on health, on clean water, or any SDG is beyond reach until the fighting stops.’

Control Arms and Oxfam distributed a joint [case study](#) on practical measures to link the ATT and the SDGs.

Fourteen states took the floor in an interactive discussion, focusing particularly on the links between the ATT and SDGs 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 5 (Gender Equality). Ireland presented its [working paper](#) on advancing states’ understanding of GBV, and several states proposed that further practical linkages be explored through the working groups over the coming year.

Transparency and Reporting

Overall, as of the beginning of CSP 2017, 72 per cent of ATT States Parties due to submit their Initial Reports had done so (61 of 85). Only 64 per cent had submitted their Annual Reports for 2016 (48 of 75).

Many states expressed concern that some states were not meeting their legal reporting obligations. Bulgaria, Japan, the UK and the EU called on countries to submit timely ATT reports in line with Article 13 of the ATT. It was agreed that future CSPs would review reporting compliance as a standing agenda item.

Six countries (Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) have kept their Initial Reports private, while three (Liberia, Panama and Senegal) have kept their Annual Reports private. Bulgaria, Germany, Norway and the UK all urged countries to submit public reports. Folade Mutota (CDRAV) gave a statement on behalf of Control Arms which also [called for public reporting](#), and named countries that had decided to maintain secrecy over transparency. Senegal, one of the countries named by Control Arms, later informed CSP 2017 that this had been a mistake and that they wanted their 2016 Annual Reports to be made public.

CSP 2017 also recommended a guide to streamlining national reporting practices (produced by Sweden) that could help states struggling to meet their Article 13 obligations. States also endorsed a Q&A document on annual reports (produced by Belgium) that tries to help clarify technical questions when filling in the reporting template. This document can be amended and expanded in the future. Finally, CSP 2017 also decided to establish a database of national

points of contact to go on the restricted part of the ATT Secretariat's website. Control Arms opposed this decision as keeping such a database secret undermines the broader spirit of transparency.

Universalization

At the beginning of CSP 2017 there were 92 States Parties to the ATT and 41 Signatories. Regional membership is particularly strong in Europe and the Americas, but particularly low in Asia. While 27 of the top 50 arms exporters are part of the ATT, only 15 of the top recipients are members.

New membership has slowed in the past year, with only seven new members joining the Treaty since June 2016 (compared to 14 the year before). Several countries gave encouraging updates on their late-stage ratification processes. These included Haiti, Angola, Kazakhstan, Canada, Chile, Brazil, and Cameroon. Chile called on 'all states to comply with obligations in the Treaty, including the Article 6 & 7 obligations not to make transfers which might violate IHL or human rights. We share the concerns of civil society in this regard.'

Seventeen speakers took the floor during this session, and discussed, among other topics, the link between good implementation of the ATT and its successful universalization (Australia, Bulgaria), and the need for material to be translated into more languages (South Africa). Stephen Singo (SRIC) gave the [Control Arms statement](#) in this session, which stressed that universalization must not come at the expense of robust implementation, and highlighted how effective implementation can encourage other states to join the Treaty.

International Assistance

One achievement over the last year has been the establishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF), which provides support to states working to implement the ATT, the majority of which have civil society implementing partners. The VTF has received donations worth \$1.9m from nine states, as well as further pledges worth \$140,000 from Ireland and the Netherlands. It has approved 17 proposals from 16 countries, and released the first instalments of funds to 11 projects.

All of the 14 states that spoke during this session commended the work of the VTF, and Finland, Germany and Switzerland committed to providing financial support in 2018.

UNDP presented on the sponsorship programme it administers. Sierra Leone raised concerns with the current running of the programme, particularly the difficulty in obtaining visas.

Cesar Jaramillo (Project Ploughshares) spoke for Control Arms highlighting a [joint paper](#) produced with Sweden that resulted from an informal working lunch with a range of governments during the Informal Preparatory Meetings this year. The paper makes recommendations for increasing global participation. He also reported on Control Arms' sponsorship programme for civil society, which has enabled 64 NGO participants from around the world to attend CSP meetings this year.

The ATT Secretariat, and planning for CSP 2018

As with last year, states seemed at their most energised and engaged when discussing the mechanics of the Treaty, and internal staffing and budget matters.

States have only provided slightly more than half of due contributions, an unsustainable status for the ATT Secretariat. Elizabeth Kirkham of Saferworld pointed out on behalf of Control Arms that the ATT Secretariat needed support, and that its entire budget (\$1.03m for 2017-18) is [less than 0.0001%](#) of the global value of the arms trade.

The ATT Secretariat, which currently has three full-time staff, has rapidly expanded its workload. CSP 2017 considered proposals to increase its capacity to meet these demands, including hiring a new staff member, or using part of the funds for the VTF to add to staff capacity. The Management Committee was asked to find a workable solution to this problem.

The ATT Secretariat has built up uncommitted funds worth \$400,000. States decided to use \$150,000 of this money to the existing budget for developing a new IT system, with the remaining \$250,000 rolling-over into the next financial period. While some states suggested establishing a financial buffer for the ATT Secretariat, others opposed this proposal as it might relieve governments of their responsibility to meet their legal obligation to provide proportionate financial support.

Ambassador Nobushige Takamizawa of Japan will be the President of CSP 2018, with Argentina, France, Georgia and South Africa serving as Vice Presidents. New members of the Management Committee were also agreed, with Cote d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Czech Republic, and Panama serving two years, and the Netherlands and Sweden sharing the last post.

Shobha Shrestha (Women for Peace and Democracy Nepal) spoke on behalf of Control Arms to remind delegates that [CSP 2018 is a 12 months process](#), which began the moment that this conference ended. She suggested that gender-based violence, or tackling organized crime, might be appropriate topics for thematic debate at CSP 2018.

The Fourth Conference of States Parties to the ATT will be held on 20-24 August 2018 in Japan (TBC by Japan).

Civil society participation

Control Arms' delegation included 93 civil society representatives from 53 organisations. More than 50 colleagues and campaigners attended an NGO strategy day on Sunday 10 September, which also included a question and answer with Amb. Korhonen, representatives of the Management Bureau, and the ATT Secretariat. Control Arms members held numerous meetings with governments, spoke to media, and organised a range of substantive side events that tackled how states can better implement the ATT to reduce human suffering.

Media

Control Arms held a [press conference](#) at the United Nations with Amnesty International, Oxfam and Mwatana to outline our demands for the week ahead.

Campaigners gathered by the iconic 'Broken Chair' statue in central Geneva with a gigantic [postcard from citizens of the world](#), urging states to recommit to the ATT's core purpose of reducing human suffering. During the week, campaigners gave out postcards with personal messages from Yemen, Honduras, Papua New Guinea, Jamaica and South Sudan.

Control Arms members received extensive media coverage during CSP 2017 including [Channel 4](#), [ITV](#), [Deutsche Welle](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Independent](#), [Folha de S.Paulo](#), [Swissinfo](#), [Front Page Africa](#), and [Nigerian Tribune](#).

Before the Conference began, Control Arms ran a social media campaign action, counting down ten reasons why CSP 2017 needed to [#ReduceHumanSuffering](#), and connecting the ATT to the SDGs.

Side events

There were a total of 19 side events during the week, many organised or featuring civil society campaigners from the Control Arms Coalition. These panel discussions and report launches took delegates into the substantive heart of the ATT, including the impact of arms transfers on civilians around the world. These 19 events were (co-hosts in brackets):

Monday

- **Launch of the [ATT Monitor](#) 2017 Annual Report** (*Control Arms, Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands*)
- **iTrace: Monitoring global weapon diversion trends** (*Conflict Armament Research, Germany, European External Action Service*)
- **ATT Signatory States – Gaps and Possibilities for Treaty Universalization** (*SaferGlobe, Finland*)

Tuesday

- **The role of industry in the ATT** (*Aerospace and Defence Industries Association of Europe*)
- **Joining efforts to implement the ATT – best practices from the EU's Outreach Programme** (*Expertise France, BAFA*)
- **Presentation of the report 'Impact of arms transfers on the enjoyment of human rights.'** (*Peru, WILPF*)
- **How arms transfers are fuelling conflict and atrocities in the Middle East** (*Control Arms, Amnesty International, Oxfam, Pax*)
- **The prevention agenda, illicit arms flows and the SDGs – How do they connect?** (*Australia, Graduate Institute*)

Wednesday

- **Publication launch: The Broader Benefits of the Arms Trade Treaty** (*Australia, Centre for Armed Violence Reduction*)
- **Transparency and Reporting** (*Small Arms Survey, Stimson Center*)
- **Fostering shared understanding of the synergies between the ATT and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons** (*Finland, France and UNIDIR*)
- **The ATT from an African perspective: Parliaments and civil society as relevant stakeholders for universalization and implementation** (*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons*)
- **Achieving ATT universalization and effective implementation – The role of outreach and assistance activities** (*Control Arms, SIPRI, Sweden*)

Thursday

- **Mansplaining gender and disarmament** (*Geneva Disarmament Platform*)
- **Complementarite dans la mise en oeuvre du Traite sur le Commerce des Armes et la Convention de Kinshasa en Afrique centrale** (*CEEAC, ECCAS*)
- **Preparing for the 2018 Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on SALW** (*UNODA*)
- **Gender-based violence and the ATT** (*Control Arms, Ireland, Sweden, WILPF*)

Friday

- **Dialogue with Amb. Nobushige Takamizawa, Japan's candidate for the Presidency of the Fourth Conference of States Parties to the ATT** (*Japan*)

Visit the [Control Arms CSP](#) page for our statements, media releases and daily summaries

Visit the [ATT Secretariat](#) site for government statements and official conference documents

Visit [Reaching Critical Will](#) for a range of government and civil society statements