

**Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty
General Statement**

13 August 2020

On behalf of the Control Arms Coalition, I would like to express our deep gratitude to you, Mr President, and your team for the inestimable efforts in organizing this Sixth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (CSP6) despite these unprecedented circumstances. We would also like to express our gratitude to the ATT Secretariat for their continuous efforts and coordination support.

Mr President,

Alongside reducing human suffering and contributing to peace, security and stability, transparency is one of the three central purposes of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

Transparency is what makes the Treaty more than a set of obligations. It is the commitment to transparency by all States Parties that enables the ATT to bring the arms trade out of the shadows and effect meaningful change.

Transparency in reporting facilitates honest, independent and accurate assessments and analysis of Treaty compliance, particularly related to export and import decisions, and builds confidence amongst States Parties. It also demonstrates effective Treaty implementation, promotes good practices, and facilitates international cooperation and assistance, where necessary.

Transparency in the Treaty process enables civil society to play a crucial role in supporting the Treaty's implementation and its reporting mechanisms. It also facilitates input from a wide range of independent observers and other stakeholders that provide a variety of perspectives, ultimately ensuring both balance and substantive progress towards the Treaty's implementation.

Yet, almost six years since the Treaty entered into force, the initial momentum toward transparency is now at risk.

From ATT States Parties today, we see a steady decline in the quantity and quality of reporting on arms transfers, along with an increasing unwillingness to make arms transfer data publicly available. While analysis to be presented in this year's edition of the ATT Monitor Annual Report¹ shows that on-time reporting rates for 2019 annual reports, due 31 May 2020, were the lowest of any year since reporting began, this is likely due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, the time of this statement, according to the ATT Secretariat website, only half of States Parties have fulfilled their Treaty obligations to submit annual reports. More concerning, however, is the percentage of confidential reports that continues to increase steadily each year. If in 2015 only two per cent of ATT States Parties chose to keep their annual reports private, an alarming 20 per cent did so in 2019.

Another troubling trend is the growing interest in closed processes that exclude the voices of key ATT stakeholders. This is evident in a variety of contexts in the ATT process: States Parties are encouraged to make greater use of the restricted area of the ATT website; access to the organizational documents of the

¹ 1 Control Arms (2020). 'ATT Monitor 2020'. <https://attmonitor.org>, forthcoming

Diversion Information Exchange Forum is limited to States Parties and signatories; and the CSP6 Draft Decisions were initially to be circulated only among States Parties. Observer states, UN agencies, international organisations, civil society, and industry play a critical role in the Treaty's universalization and implementation and in holding States Parties accountable to their commitments. Civil society provides substantive input into ATT working groups, contributes to national and regional capacity-building worldwide, and develops independent research and analysis to support states in their efforts to join and implement the Treaty. Without access to provide independent input into the discussion and debate inside forums that tackle diversion and other challenging issues, States Parties risk losing this valuable resource. Compounding this trend are the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which further limit the ability to gather, communicate, cooperate and share information.

The consequences of irresponsible arms transfers and diversion are more devastating than ever, as countries face not only the COVID-19 pandemic, but also economic decline and instability. In Yemen for instance, airstrikes carried out by the Saudi-led coalition and the use of hospitals for military purposes by the Houthis² created further barriers to accessing healthcare facilities in a country where the health system is already faced with a severe shortage of medical supplies and personnel. Additionally, high levels of malnutrition and low levels of immunity due to outbreaks of cholera and diphtheria, along with the fact that nearly 18 million people do not have access to clean water, ensure that the COVID-19 outbreak will compound the devastating impact the crisis is already having on Yemen civilians.

Transparency in arms transfers decisions must also become a key priority as we move forward together. The effectiveness of the Treaty's implementation cannot be assessed without open discussions regarding compliance with the Treaty's provisions. Only by rigorously assessing arms transfers decisions against the Treaty's criteria and by providing scrutiny to possible Treaty violations by others can we ensure that implementation efforts are effective.

We also take this opportunity to urge ATT States Parties, in the preparations for the Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (CSP7) and the associated preparatory meetings, to include contingency measures to tackle the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which have delayed progress in the context of the ATT. Such measures will ensure that this enduring pandemic will not result in another year of lost opportunities to make much-needed progress in the implementation of this Treaty.

Mr President,

What began more than 20 years ago in Costa Rica as a simple idea to regulate the weapons trade, is now ratified by 110 governments from across all regions. This is an incredible achievement by the ATT States Parties supported by civil society and should be celebrated. States Parties, along with all ATT stakeholders, must now work together to ensure that the Treaty is implemented effectively - and transparently - to reduce human suffering.

² OHCHR (2019). Report of the detailed findings of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen on "Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014" 3 September 2019, A/HRC/42/CRP.1
https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/GEE-Yemen/A_HRC_42_CRP_1.PDF p.9