



Eighth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

Statement during the  
Opening Session of the Conference

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Mr. President, Distinguished delegates,

I am honored to be here with you today speaking on behalf of the Control Arms Coalition.

My country, Colombia, has one of the highest number of firearms-related deaths in the world, [following](#) Brazil, the United States, Venezuela, Mexico and India.

Almost 5 million weapons in Colombia are in the hands of civilians. Only 14% of them are legally registered.

In the spring of 2021, the impact of these weapons was made alarmingly clear. National protests culminated in violence and ultimately the death of at least 46 people, over 100 injured, at [least 60 cases of reported](#) of sexual violence.

More than [70% of the injuries](#) suffered by civilians during the 2021 protests were caused by firearms.

Unfortunately, this is not unique to Colombia.

While Latin American and Caribbean countries - except for Colombia - have not faced armed conflict in recent decades, high levels of armed violence persist.

This is the region with the highest homicide rates in the world. More than 70% of these homicides are committed with firearms.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these problems. Countries in the region experienced a significant increase in [violence perpetrated by gangs and criminal groups](#), and in gender-based and domestic violence. Though lockdown measures initially prompted a downturn in violence, homicide rates rose again quickly in many countries in the region, including [Colombia](#).

These high levels of armed violence and criminality in Latin America and the Caribbean are facilitated by the diversion of arms into the hands of unscrupulous actors. Diversion of



weapons from the United States have served to arm criminal networks, including gangs and drug trafficking organizations.

Also supporting the violence perpetrated by these networks are weapons that are initially transferred legally to Latin America and the Caribbean, but find their way to illicit markets due to ineffective national stockpile management, theft, and corruption or diversion from private security companies.

The Arms Trade Treaty was adopted to contribute to international and regional peace, security and stability by regulating the international trade in conventional arms. If implemented effectively, it can prevent armed violence both in conflict and in non-conflict situations and reduce human suffering.

With its specific provisions relating to the prevention of diversion, the Treaty provides a framework to stop the illicit and irresponsible flow of arms into my region, which have resulted in unspeakable suffering.

To date 79% of Latin American and Caribbean countries have ratified the ATT. But there is still work to be done to ensure its effective implementation.

Latin American and Caribbean countries must commit to taking the necessary precautions set out in the ATT that prevent diversion, particularly through safe and secure weapons' management. Additionally, exporting countries must similarly work hand in hand with Latin American countries to develop and implement joint measures that can limit the likelihood that arms end up in the hands of criminal actors.

In order to effectively prevent armed violence, organized crime and terrorism, states must continue to strengthen arms transfer controls and ensure that national regulations and processes are in line with the highest possible common international standards.

I also welcome the President's initiative to focus this year's theme on post-shipment controls. These types of measures ensure that risks associated with arms transfers can be mitigated long after the export has been approved.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, and colleagues

Many of you present here today might think that these problems are beyond your power or even, your responsibility.



But I'm here to tell you that they are not – you can help.

First - Use the CSP process to focus on implementation progress – not process. Eight years of process is enough.

It is time to discuss where the Treaty is working and where it faces challenges. And in these conversations, we must all take the time to consider the human cost of arms transfers on communities affected by conflict and armed violence.

Second – Use the CSP process to share your practical experience with fellow ATT stakeholders. Discussions about actual cases of diversion, risk assessment application and arms transfer decision-making processes can be incredibly valuable to new states with arms transfer control systems in development.

Third – Use the CSP to support accountability in the arms trade. Confer with colleagues on how to best assess and address arms transfers to contexts of concern. Build a community of practice where together, we can reach the highest possible common international standards to regulate the trade of conventional weapons.

We cannot lose sight that we are here today to reduce human suffering.

Thank you for your attention.