

## FACT SHEET

### THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

**It was a historic day on 2 April 2013, when the General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). This vote marked a turning point in the international community’s efforts to regulate the global trade in conventional arms and to promote peace and security.**

In all parts of the world, the ready availability of weapons and ammunition has led to human suffering, political repression, crime and terror among civilian populations. Irresponsible transfers of conventional weapons can destabilise security in a region, enable the violation of arms embargoes and contribute to human rights abuses. Investment is discouraged and development disrupted in countries experiencing conflict and high levels of violence. Countries affected by conflict or pervasive crime have the most difficulty attaining the Millennium Development Goals.



Vote tally board on 2 April 2013 at the historic General Assembly session adopting the Arms Trade Treaty.

The protection of civilians is one of the areas in which the ATT can positively impact the work of the United Nations. The ATT can add significantly to efforts to protect children in situations of conflict or widespread armed violence. It will also provide the United Nations with a tool to put pressure on States Parties not to export weapons or ammunition to areas where they are used to commit gender-based violence and violence against women.

#### Setting global norms

Virtually all areas of world trade are covered by regulations that bind countries into agreed conduct. Before the adoption of the ATT, there was no global set of rules governing the trade in conventional weapons. The ATT sets robust international standards to help guide governments in the process of deciding whether or not to authorise arms transfers.

#### Current Status

- 114 States have signed the Treaty
- 8 States have ratified the Treaty
- 50 ratifications are needed for entry into force

## **For the United Nations, the Arms Trade Treaty holds powerful promises**

- Reduce armed conflict and violence, which impact millions of civilians every year;
- Help create a more conducive environment for the UN to carry out its mandates in peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding and in the promotion of the Millennium Development Goals;
- Foster a safer environment for humanitarian actors operating in volatile areas across the globe.

### **Essential elements**

- **Scope:** It includes all important weapons systems: battle tanks, personnel carriers, artillery, fighter jets, attack helicopters, warships, missiles, and small arms and light weapons.
- **Criteria for assessment:** There are clear prohibitions for exports related to Security Council arms embargoes, genocide and war crimes. Furthermore, States will deny an export if there is an "overriding risk" that weapons may be used to impact peace and security, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, terrorism, organised crime, and gender-based violence.
- **Commitment to regulate:** States commit to develop an export and import control system. Furthermore, they are encouraged to regulate transit, and arms brokers.
- **Commitment to report:** Transparency is key. States commit to report on their present regulatory system, and – annually – their actual imports and exports of weapons.
- **International cooperation/assistance:** The ATT includes provisions on institutional capacity-building and establishes a UN trust fund.
- **Ammunition** as well as parts and components are covered.

### **The role of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs**

- Coordinating the UN system on all issues related to the arms trade;
- Building synergies with related topics such as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and stockpile management;
- Offering a 'one-stop shop' for donors and countries requesting assistance;
- Providing advice, organising regional meetings, assisting in implementation and capacity-building – especially through UNODA regional centres in Lomé, Lima and Kathmandu.

### **Supporting activities**

The United Nations launched a multi-donor Implementation Support Facility known as the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR). The Facility's purpose is to provide a flexible funding mechanism for activities in support of the implementation of the ATT, mobilising resources to promote the ATT and to support governments in their preparations for ratification. Contact us at [conventionalarms-unoda@un.org](mailto:conventionalarms-unoda@un.org).

**“This treaty demonstrates that great things can be achieved when governments and civil society work together through the United Nations.”**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon