



NGO STATEMENT
United Nations General Assembly
First Committee on Disarmament and International Security
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Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues,

Each year, member states, international organizations and civil society come together at the First Committee to recognize progress in disarmament and encourage the adherence to and development of strong common international standards in support of international peace and security.

As the number and type of weapons that are manufactured, sold, used and threatened in the name of “peace and security” continue to grow, we must ensure that international security does not become synonymous with militarism.

The irresponsible and illicit proliferation of conventional arms fuel cyclical conflicts and armed violence. Even in the midst of rising nuclear threats and rapid development of new weapons technology, all with the potential to inflict ever-increasing levels of harm, we must not ignore the importance of the effective regulation of the international trade in conventional weapons.

The Arms Trade Treaty regulates the international trade of conventional weapons with the purpose of reducing human suffering. Central to this is the ATT risk assessment, set out in Articles 6, 7 & 11 of the Treaty.

The risk assessment is rooted in international human rights and humanitarian law and must be applied comprehensively to every arms transfer. The war in Ukraine and the many other situations of conflict and armed violence around the world demonstrate that efforts must continue to strengthen ATT implementation, and more specifically, the comprehensive application of its risk assessment.

It has been seven months and 20 days since Russia’s most recent military invasion of **Ukraine**. In response to this act of aggression in violation of the UN Charter, states have and continue to supply weapons to assist Ukraine in preserving their right to self defense.

With the unprecedented volume and speed of arms transfers and military assistance to Ukraine from over 30 countries, concerns of battlefield capture by Russian forces and potential diversion beyond Ukraine’s borders are now considered critical.

The illicit trafficking and diversion of arms have continued to fuel armed conflict in the **Central Sahel and Lake Chad** basin regions, where armed groups have killed twice as many civilians between April 2021 and March 2022 as they did in 2020.



The situation in **Ethiopia** remains critical. Just last Tuesday, more than 50 people were killed in an airstrike that hit a school in northern Ethiopia's Tigray region that was sheltering people displaced by the conflict. Continuing to send arms into this region risks fueling more violations of international humanitarian law.

Irresponsible arms supplies have also fuelled the conflict in **Yemen**, now in its seventh year. Despite becoming the largest humanitarian catastrophe in modern times, several countries, including ATT states parties, continue to supply weapons to the Saudi-led coalition.

The Arms Trade Treaty risk assessment is not only required for weapons transferred into conflict zones. This prevention tool must be applied to all international arms transfers, including into areas experiencing military repression and significant levels of armed violence.

Since its February 2021 coup, the **Myanmar** military has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual violence, torture, deliberate campaigns against civilians, and murder. Despite these findings, some states continued to supply the junta with weapons of the sort that are being used to attack civilians.

While most Latin American and Caribbean countries 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, most of which are facilitated by cross-border smuggling and the diversion of arms from the legal trade to the illegal market.

At this critical time, we cannot afford to overlook the harm caused by conventional weapons. The Arms Trade Treaty, when it is implemented effectively, can prevent armed violence both in conflict and in non-conflict situations and reduce human suffering. Through the comprehensive application of the ATT risk assessment, States must at every step, consider the cost - the human cost - of irresponsible arms transfers.

Control Arms encourages states to:

- (1) Adopt the highest possible standards and establish rigorous practices when implementing the ATT and other conventional arms control instruments;
- (2) Share information concerning arms transfer decisions, in particular those involved in the application of ATT prohibitions and risk assessments;
- (3) Conduct due diligence across the entire cycle of an arms transfer and consider what measures can be put in place to limit diversion so that weapons do not end up in the hands of unauthorized actors; and
- (4) Commit to timely, accurate, comprehensive, and public reporting to all international and regional instruments, including the ATT, the UN Register on Conventional Arms (UNROCA), and the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons (UNPoA).