**First Statement**

**Commentary on the working paper presented by the Conference President: Universality as a Priority**

**Thematic discussion: Introduction to the Conference Presidency**

**Morning session, August 25, 2025**

**Thank you, Mr. President.**

Contemporary cases of arms transfers demonstrate an irresponsible pattern, most clearly evident in the case of states that have not ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, including Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, and Libya. These states suffer from widespread armed conflict and therefore need to accede to the Treaty to regulate the arms trade at the global level, prevent diversion, and reduce the human suffering caused by the proliferation of weapons. The universality of the Treaty has become an urgent necessity to preserve the lives and livelihoods of civilians.

Maat agrees with the current presidency of the conference on the existence of a set of tools and mechanisms through which the universality of the Arms Trade Treaty can be enhanced, particularly through engagement with members of parliaments and holding regional meetings with all stakeholders, including civil society organizations. In addition, the Human Rights Council mechanisms aim to improve the Treaty's visibility. Furthermore, it is important to leverage social media as a tool to reach the public and pressure governments to join the Treaty. It also emphasizes the importance of open meetings and discussions to provide a space to discuss the challenges facing States' accession to the Treaty and how to overcome them.

For example, the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism plays a fundamental role in promoting the universality of the Arms Trade Treaty. Ratification of the ATT is often among the key recommendations made to states reviewing their human rights record to improve their domestic human rights practices, particularly for countries that export weapons to countries in armed conflict, terrorist movements, and armed groups, or that divert weapons from their territories. This is often linked to the lack of strong controls and restrictions on arms exports, which ultimately leads to irresponsible arms transfers that contribute to the exacerbation of violations of international humanitarian law.

During the Ethiopian government's UPR in November 2024, a key recommendation was made to ratify the ATT due to the irresponsible arms transfers that occurred within its territory, resulting in the deaths of numerous civilians and the destruction of infrastructure.

Parliamentarians, on the other hand, have a vital role to play in promoting accession to the Arms Trade Treaty, stemming from their position as representatives of the people. They possess significant powers that enable them to be key players in this process. Their role primarily includes advocacy, as they can mobilize political and societal support by raising awareness of the importance of the treaty in reducing armed violence and promoting peace and security, and by urging all members of government to ratify the agreement. Parliamentarians therefore have the power to transform political will into concrete action, making them an indispensable part of achieving the universality of this treaty.

**Mr. President,**

Maat believes that involving victims affected by conventional weapons and marginalized groups in the advocacy process for accession to the Arms Trade Treaty is not merely a symbolic step; rather, it is a crucial necessity to humanize the issue and achieve justice. By presenting their vivid and realistic testimonies, victims transform the issue from mere numbers and statistics into real human stories, directing attention to the real consequences of the arms trade and making advocacy more urgent. This engagement also gives them a platform to express their demands for justice and accountability, and places direct moral pressure on decision-makers to consider the devastating impact of their decisions.

Furthermore, victim engagement strengthens the treaty's legitimacy and ensures that it takes into account the needs and concerns of those directly affected, contributing to building broader public and international support for the treaty. The participation of women and girls in advocating for the treaty's universality is also important to highlight the gender-specific impacts of armed violence, such as the increased risks of sexual violence and exploitation. Maat calls on the Conference Presidency to consider this approach when preparing for future activities.

Maat would like to ask the Conference Presidency about the future steps it intends to take to promote the universality of the Arms Trade Treaty in the Arab region, given that only three Arab countries have ratified the treaty despite their need for standards that limit the irresponsible arms trade, which the treaty provides.

**Thank you!**