

GI-TOC STATEMENT FOR ATT CSP11

Madam President, distinguished delegates, colleagues,

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC) thanks the President, Bureau, and Secretariat for their leadership in convening the Eleventh Conference of States Parties. We commend States Parties for their commitment to advancing the Treaty's objectives: reducing human suffering, preventing diversion, and strengthening transparency in the global arms trade. We particularly welcome the theme of this year's conference, universalisation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

As a global civil society organisation that investigates and analyses all aspects of international organised crime, we would like to comment on the links between transnational criminality and illicit arms diversion and proliferation. One feeds the other, with illegal arms acting as an enabler and commodity for crime, both a market and an accelerant method. This was true before the ATT came into being and is true today, but the context has changed fundamentally in the following areas

First, organised criminals have been quick to adopt digital methods for buying and selling illegal arms, ammunition and material. End-to-end encrypted media channels and dark web platforms are posing significant challenges for law enforcement and international bodies. The ATT has adapted less quickly to ensure its provisions and advisory addendums keep pace with unregulated online markets.

Second, we continue to observe the desire by organised criminals to obtain modern, military-grade weapons, ammunition and components. These high-end weapons are being supplied to conflict zones by state-backed arms manufacturers through legal and regulated processes; but too often, diversion is occurring that fuels not the legitimate right for states to self-protection, but rather the arms race between transnational criminals and state authorities. In some countries gangs are equipping themselves with military weapons and capabilities once the preserve of state militaries; and the impact is felt by communities and citizens.

Third, illicit arms markets have become tools of some states who use criminality as a means of imposing cost on regions or countries with whom they are in conflict. This geo-criminality can be understood as deliberate, state-backed efforts to circumvent international instruments and treaties like the Arms Trade Treaty, to ensure illicit arms markets thrive in certain areas. The ATT must adapt to this challenge.

Fourth, over the past decade, the world has witnessed a marked increase in the deployment of mercenaries and private military companies in armed conflicts. The United Nations Secretary-General has repeatedly warned that mercenaries are exacerbating human rights violations, fuelling transnational organized crime, and enabling parties to evade their responsibilities under international law. GITOC research, and recent findings by the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries, highlight a serious risk that weapons lawfully transferred to states are being "re-routed" to private military actors, including those implicated in atrocities and illicit economic activity. Such

diversions undermine a central principle of the ATT that arms must only be transferred to a designated, accountable end user, following rigorous risk assessment.

Finally, the rapid proliferation of drones and other uncrewed systems is already reshaping both armed conflict and organized crime. They are being deployed not only on the battlefield, but also in illicit markets for smuggling, targeted violence, and surveillance. Their accessibility through civilian supply chains and 3D printing raises profound risks of diversion and misuse. They are found in air, land and maritime domains. Yet drones remain inconsistently treated within ATT categories and reporting practices. Without common standards, States Parties cannot fully assess or mitigate the risks they pose. We therefore recommend that States Parties:

- Recognize PMCs as potential end users within ATT risk-assessment frameworks.
- Strengthen monitoring and enforcement of end-user certificates to reduce diversion.
- Act on the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation's suggestion to initiate discussions at this CSP on how the Treaty should respond to the growing role of private military actors.
- Explicitly recognize armed drones and other uncrewed systems within ATT reporting and control mechanisms.
- Explore regulatory approaches to production and component traceability, to help prevent their misuse by organized crime and terrorist groups.

Closing

Mister President, colleagues,

These issues demonstrate the need for the Treaty community to adapt. Addressing these challenges will help ensure that the ATT remains effective in preventing diversion, protecting civilians, and reducing human suffering.

GITOC stands ready to support States Parties with research and analysis to inform these discussions.

Thank you.