



**Ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty  
(Geneva, 21-25 August 2023)  
General statement**

Madam President,

Let me start by expressing the full support of my delegation to you, Ambassador YOON, in fulfilling your duties as President of this Ninth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty. We also want to thank the Korean presidency for its leadership throughout the preparatory process and thank the Secretariat as well for its important daily work.

Belgium aligns itself fully with the statement made by the Representative of the European Union and would like to add a couple of points of particular national interest.

Belgium welcomes the emphasis on certain topics put forward by the Korean presidency, mostly the positive role that industry, and the private sector in a larger scope, can play to help States implement the Treaty and make sure its goals and objectives are fulfilled. We share the assessment that the industry could have a more vocal role in our proceedings, especially on its role to detect and prevent diversion cases. We are pleased to see a reference to the practical guide for the private sector edited by the government of Flanders on how to implement an Internal Compliance Programme in the annex of your draft working paper.

Belgium would also like to warmly thank Argentina for launching the initiative of the questionnaire related to the prevention of gender-based violence. Belgium has filled in the questionnaire and is ready to share it whether on request or by publishing it on the website if agreed by the State Parties.

Madam President,

This conference is taking place in the middle of a war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, unleashing a level of violence unseen on the European continent for a long time. Considering the vast amount of grave breaches of IHL committed by the Russian armed forces, including intentional strikes on civilians and critical infrastructure (like schools and hospitals, the Nova Kakhovka Dam and grain transport infrastructures), forced displacement of population illustrated by the kidnapping of several thousand Ukrainian children deported to Russia, as well as countless acts of sexual violence against civilians and prisoners, it is our assessment that no State Party to the ATT could transfer arms and ammunition to the Russian Federation in application of the art 6 and 7 of the Treaty.

As already mentioned in the statement read by my colleague of the European Union, the ATT is the instrument of reference to establish the highest possible common standards regarding the international arms trade. This instrument is precious and deserves our unwavering commitment. Belgium is therefore concerned about the dire financial situation of the Treaty as was presented by the Secretariat in its document "Status of Contributions to ATT Budgets" in May this year. For this reason, we call on States in arrears to enter a financial arrangement in order to pay their dues in full and to settle their outstanding arrears without further delay.

Belgium is also concerned by the decreasing level of reporting year after year. Reporting is not only a legal obligation under the ATT, it also directly contributes to transparency and confidence-building, two important objectives of the Treaty. Belgium calls on all State Parties to fulfil their obligations on reporting, or, if facing challenges to do so, to take the opportunity of assistance provided by the Voluntary Trust Fund or the EU-financed Implementation Support Project.

I thank you Madam President.