

Seventh Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty

Treaty Implementation

31 August 2021 - Geneva, Switzerland

Delivered by: Frank Slijper, PAX

Mr. Chair,

Control Arms recognizes and appreciates the work done during this difficult year by each of the sub-Working Groups on implementation. These efforts have continued to pave the way toward a strong framework for Treaty implementation.

Control Arms takes this opportunity to highlight a few concrete examples of the positive impact of ATT implementation -- and we hope States will do the same -- to ensure that the guidance developed by the working groups reflects these important developments.

There is a clear need for States Parties to share information on how they apply the ATT to individual licensing decisions. The Netherlands has offered to discuss publicly its own risk assessment process, including the basis for declining certain export licences. Sharing the steps that States Parties take to assess risk provides pathways for others to apply successful strategies and address known challenges.

This is what meaningful information sharing looks like.

Over several CSP cycles, we urged states to openly discuss problematic arms transfers, most notably in the context of the Yemen war. In early 2021, Italy took the decision to revoke export licenses, which cancelled the shipment of more than 12,700 bombs to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. As announced by Mwatana, with this action, Italy stopped providing bombs to countries conducting indiscriminate and disproportionate airstrikes that kill, wound and grievously harm civilians, and exacerbate an ever-worsening humanitarian crisis.¹

This is what meaningful risk assessment looks like.

Control Arms sees value in gaining an understanding of how frequently the ATT is being used in licensing decisions. Conducting a national-level survey of the number of licences granted and refused by States Parties consistent with their Article 6 & 7 obligations and their related sub-articles would help inform the guidance developed by this working group.

¹ Mwatana (2021). [The Italian Government Revokes Bomb Export Licenses To Saudi Arabia And The United Arab Emirates](#)

In the sub-working group for Article 9, Control Arms sees a key opportunity to address the parameters of the obligations of States Parties engaged in the transit and transshipment of conventional weapons and consider how to implement them efficiently and within the appropriate scale.

We welcome the paper presented by the sub-working group on Article 11 on diversion risk assessment. Beyond the existing good practice identified in this paper, we urge states to address key weaknesses in the legal arms trade systems. Recent events in Afghanistan and before that, the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, illustrate too well the negative impact of the diversion of legally transferred arms in these regions.

And yet, countries react too often to crises by supplying more arms into areas already awash with them. In a distressing echo of events from the 1980s and 90s, last week Amnesty reported that weapons recently exported legally into West Africa are now in the possession of armed groups in the Sahel, including an Islamic State affiliate that has claimed responsibility for hundreds of civilian deaths. Meanwhile, the EU is developing a new mechanism -- the European Peace Facility -- for organising the transfer of more military equipment into fragile settings. States should reassess whether the answer to an overabundance of weapons, especially in a fragile context, is more weapons.

These situations illustrate the urgent need for risk assessments to take a longer view, including risk of future instability or state collapse and its likely consequences. In this regard, we encourage the Working Groups on Articles 6, 7 and 11 to explore how States Parties can incorporate such perspectives into their decision-making processes.