

SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

31 AUGUST 2021, GENEVA

Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Treaty Universalization

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) expresses its appreciation to you, Mr President, and Ambassador Villegas of Argentina, for your work as Co-chairs of the Working Group on Treaty Universalization.

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has presented us all with unprecedented challenges. This is possibly why we have seen no States joining the Treaty since the last Conference of States Parties. It is incumbent on all stakeholders now to make sure this remains an exception. The ICRC urges the 31 Signatories and all States that are not yet party to the ATT to accede to the Treaty at the earliest opportunity. In its role as President of this Conference, Sierra Leone's focused engagement with States not yet party, including at the highest political level, will no doubt pay off in coming years.

The ICRC acknowledges and welcomes steps taken by several States at the national level to enable their adherence to the Treaty. We stand ready to support these efforts. The ICRC's Advisory Service on IHL here in Geneva, our delegations in capitals around the world, as well as our delegation to the United Nations in New York offer their technical assistance to States in support of the adoption and implementation of the Treaty.

In the ICRC's view, the Co-Chairs' draft report rightly underlines the importance of dialogue with States not yet party to promote understanding of the ATT's objectives, dispel any misconceptions and highlight the Treaty's benefits.

The ICRC continues to promote adherence to the ATT and its faithful implementation through a range of activities. These include raising awareness of the Treaty in bilateral dialogue with States and at regional conferences. Over the course of last year, the ICRC has promoted adherence with non-signatory States in Latin America, Europe, East Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Recognising the specificities of regional arms flows, the ICRC supports the identification and creation of opportunities to discuss the Treaty at regional or sub-regional levels. We encourage States Parties to share their experiences in implementing the Treaty with neighbouring States. Such dialogue can increase understanding of the Treaty's practical implications and its humanitarian benefits and attract additional States parties.

In Africa, we collaborate closely with the African Union (AU) in the framework of its 'Silencing the Guns' initiative. The ICRC and the Pretoria Office of the Institute for Security Studies also co-hosted an online webinar entitled "Time for action on the Arms Trade Treaty" in November 2020. The webinar highlighted the humanitarian consequences of the illicit trade in arms, and brought together global, AU, government and civil society perspectives on the implementation of the ATT. And, later this year, our annual East African Regional IHL Conference will focus on the ATT.

The ICRC will continue to work tirelessly to support States Parties in their implementation of the ATT to the highest possible standard. When States Parties demonstrably act in accordance with the letter of the Treaty and in line with its humanitarian purpose, it builds confidence in the Treaty's

humanitarian benefits as an instrument to keep arms out of the hands of those who would use them to commit war crimes, serious violations of international human rights law or other serious crimes. The faithful implementation of the ATT is the most compelling testimony to its effectiveness and will go a long way in attracting other States to join.