



January 31, 2012

The Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

By Email: pm@pm.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

RE: Support the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty

On behalf of 3.2 million working Canadians, I am writing you to urge your government to support a robust and comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty at the United Nations (UN) negotiations in 2012.

Each day, armed conflict results in the deaths of 2,000 people worldwide, and countless others are maimed. Illicit and irresponsible transfers of arms are the cause of many of the world's greatest human rights abuses, conflicts, and humanitarian disasters. The world needs a strong, comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty that holds governments to account and that is workable and enforceable.

Next summer, parties will attempt to negotiate a worldwide treaty to define international standards to regulate the cross-border trade in conventional weapons. A strong treaty will be rooted in the responsibilities of states under international law. States have a duty to interdict any transfer if there is significant risk that the weapons in question will be used in contravention of international law and norms, including contravention of UN arms embargoes, UN Charter commitments, or serious violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law. To succeed, the treaty must be comprehensive in scope and include all arms, ammunition and related equipment, as well as all types and manner of transfer. Finally, the treaty must establish clear guidelines for transparency and full implementation.

The UN Arms Trade Treaty has been years in the making. Despite the inherent difficulty in negotiating such an agreement, the treaty has gone a considerable distance over the course of three preparatory committee meetings in the lead up to the negotiation conference planned for July 2012. The permanent members of the Security Council, together accounting for 80% of all transfers in conventional weapons, jointly declared their support for the treaty negotiations.

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Canada has adopted the position of supporting the UN treaty, and its role to date has been constructive. However, we are concerned by objections raised recently by Canada, specifically the call for wording excluding "sporting and hunting firearms for recreational use" from the treaty. The treaty will only apply to international transfers of weapons, and has no bearing on the domestic availability of these weapons. Internationally, however, there is no clear agreed-upon distinction between civilian and military firearms, and an exclusion to this effect will frustrate the negotiation of a strong, encompassing agreement.

No fewer than 15 UN Member States have objected to Canada's position on the exclusion. We call on the Canadian government to withdraw its objections to the drafting of a robust, comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty.

The objective of ridding the world of illicit and irresponsible arms transfers that generate so much conflict and misery, is both commendable and achievable. We can make the dream of millions of men, women and children around the globe come true, and Canada must continue to be in the forefront of states making their aspirations a reality.

Sincerely,



Kenneth V. Georgetti
President

cc. CLC Officers and Executive Assistants