



June 3, 2013

A historical step forward for millions living in fear of armed violence

Governments sign first ever global Arms Trade Treaty

History will be made today at the United Nations as more than a third of its member states sign a treaty designed to protect millions living in fear of armed violence and at risk of rape, assault, displacement and death every single day.

Many of the world's top exporters of arms including the UK, Germany and France will sign the Treaty alongside emerging exporters such as Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. Canada has not indicated whether it intends to sign the Treaty.

The Treaty sets global standards for tighter controls on arms transfers to keep weapons out of the hands of criminals, terrorists and regimes that attack their own citizens. The Canadian members of the international Control Arms coalition that has campaigned for the treaty for more than a decade have urged the Canadian government to become an early treaty signatory.

Lina Holguin of Oxfam said: "By signing the Arms Trade Treaty today, Canada would give hope to millions of people affected by armed violence. Should Canada not sign, it would give comfort to dictators and gangsters."

Ken Epps of Project Ploughshares said: "We look forward to Canada either signing today or announcing its intention to move quickly towards signature and subsequent ratification of the Treaty."

Hilary Homes of Amnesty International said: "This Treaty is about saving lives. The world is moving forward to regulate the deadly trade in weapons, with or without Canada.

Eight of the most violence-affected countries in the world will also sign, to make it more difficult for illicit arms to cross their borders. These include conflict-affected countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan seeking to protect the millions of people who live displaced from their homes due to armed violence.

The new treaty makes it illegal for a state to authorize arms transfers where there is a big risk that the arms will be used to commit human rights abuses or crimes against humanity, even after a deal has been agreed.

Background Notes

1. The Arms Trade Treaty was adopted by overwhelming majority vote at the General Assembly on April 3. Three States voted against – Iran, Syria and North Korea, 156 states voted for and 22 abstained.
2. The treaty will come into force 90 days after the 50th signatory state has completed the ratification process.
3. By signing the treaty states commit to:
 - Properly regulate all transfers of conventional arms, ammunition or parts and components.
 - Ban the export of conventional arms, ammunition, or parts and components where there is knowledge the weapons would be used to perpetrate war crimes, genocide, attacks against civilians, and other grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.
 - Comprehensively assess the risk that any export will contribute to or undermine peace and security or facilitate serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, terrorism, organized crime, gender-based violence or violence against women and children.
 - Take into account the risk that arms might be re-directed from the original recipient to another user – known as “diversion”.
 - Submit annual reports on its international transfers and national implementation activities to the other States Parties.

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