

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### What is the Arms Trade Treaty process?

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) process began in the 1990s when civil society actors and Nobel Peace Prize Laureates voiced their concern over the unregulated nature of the global arms trade and its impact on human security. Subsequently, a number of States developed an interest in the issue and began a formal process under the purview of the United Nations.

In 2006, the United Nations General Assembly requested countries to submit their views on a possible ATT. More than 100 countries did. These views were collected in a 2007 report of the UN Secretary-General. In 2008 a Group of Governmental Experts examined the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. In 2009 an Open-ended Working Group – open to all UN Member States – held two meetings on an ATT.

At the end of 2009, the General Assembly decided to convene a Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in 2012 "to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms". The Conference has been preceded by four sessions of a Preparatory Committee (PrepCom). The report of the PrepCom contains decisions and recommendations for the Conference (A/CONF.217/1).

More information: [www.un.org/disarmament/ATT](http://www.un.org/disarmament/ATT).

### Who will be present in the negotiating Conference?

The Conference will take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 2 – 27 July 2012 (there will be no meetings on Wednesday 4 July as UN Headquarters will be officially closed). The Conference will begin with a high-level segment during which the attendance of government ministers and the Secretary-General of the United Nations is expected.

All 193 United Nations Member States are expected to participate in the Conference. It is customary for these delegations to be composed of diplomats and national experts from various governmental departments. Delegations must present official credentials which are to be issued either by their countries' Head of State, Head of Government or the Minister for Foreign Affairs or equivalent.

The Conference will be serviced by a secretariat composed of international civil servants from the United Nations. Accredited non-governmental organizations, public interest groups, arms industry representatives, members of the media and researchers, entities with Observer status with the UN, and other inter-governmental organizations will attend the Conference and may possibly address the Conference during a dedicated time slot, to be decided by Member States.

### How will an ATT be negotiated?

The Conference will on its first day elect a President to lead the negotiations. The President-designate is Ambassador Roberto García Moritán of Argentina. Negotiations will take place daily in two sessions from 10:00-13:00 and 15:00-18:00. The Conference, should it so choose, can work in parallel committees or working groups. Many issues will also be discussed in closed informal meetings as is customary in similar processes.

### Why do we need an ATT?

The global trade in conventional arms is a legitimate business. Many now feel that this type of trade should be subject to common international rules and regulations as is the case for the global trade in other commodities.

Most countries have national controls on the import and export of arms. However, the lack of common international standards makes it easier for unscrupulous arms merchants to exploit gaps and loopholes.

### Will the ATT infringe on national gun ownership?

No. It is the sovereign right of every country to decide and oversee its national regulations regarding gun ownership. The ATT Conference will have no jurisdiction in this matter.

### What practical difference will an ATT make after it is concluded?

The ATT will bind those Member States that sign and ratify the final treaty text. Subsequently, the implementation of the modalities agreed to in the treaty will be left to those Member States. Ideally, an ATT will create a level playing field for the global arms trade, bringing to it more accountability, openness and transparency. If implemented in good faith an ATT can make it harder for human rights abusers, criminals and arms traffickers to obtain weapons – because the selling country would assess the importer's credentials against the objective globally agreed norms.

### What will the ATT do about weapons already in circulation?

The ATT will only deal with the trade in arms across borders, not with present military holdings or with civilian possession.

### Will the ATT aim to dismantle the arms industry?

No. The ATT is not aimed to ban any weapon category from being manufactured. The ATT is currently supported by many arms manufacturers.

### Will the ATT effect negatively on the way UN peacekeeping forces operate?

No. The ATT receives broad support from peacekeeping and military professionals. An ATT can make peacekeeping theatres significantly safer for those men and women serving to secure peace in conflict or post-conflict situations.

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