



Foreign &
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Office

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Thank you for your e-mail about the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

The British Government is delighted that we have achieved agreement on an Arms Trade Treaty after almost a decade of hard work and commitment and seven years of tough negotiations. The Treaty was adopted by a vote in the UN General Assembly on 2 April, and the figures demonstrated overwhelmingly the extent to which it was supported across the world: 154 countries voted in favour, 3 voted against (Iran, North Korea, and Syria), and 23 countries abstained. When it became clear that the Diplomatic Conference would not reach consensus on the Treaty (because it was blocked by the same three countries who voted against it) we tabled a resolution in the General Assembly to avoid losing the support and momentum that had been achieved. Even at such short notice, this resolution received consistently strong support and was co-sponsored by 103 countries.

We worked very closely with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society to achieve this great outcome, and they too should be congratulated for their hard work and dedication over the years. NGOs share our pleasure and pride that the Arms Trade Treaty was agreed, and the UN Secretary-General also thanked them for their work.

Speaking of the adoption of the ATT, the Prime Minister said: "We should be proud of the role Britain has played to secure this ambitious agreement, working with international partners to secure this momentous step that will make our world safer for all." The UN Secretary-General commented that the Treaty was "a victory for the world's people" and that "the ATT will make it more difficult for deadly weapons to be diverted into the illicit market and it will help keep warlords, pirates, terrorists, criminals and their like from acquiring deadly arms."

The final Treaty was significantly stronger than the text which emerged from the last round of negotiations in July 2012. This was a result of sustained lobbying and diplomacy by our Ministers, officials, and civil society. This Treaty takes tangible steps to make a real difference to peace and security because it sets out for the first time legally-binding global commitments to control arms exports, along with a global baseline for regulation. Specifically, the Treaty:

- Covers the transfer of small arms and light weapons and the seven UN categories of conventional arms;
- Provides an explicit requirement for a national control system, with controls to apply to the broadest range of arms, plus ammunition and munitions and parts and components;
- Contains prohibitions on exports that would be used for genocide, crimes against humanity, or a broad range of war crimes;
- Contains a mandatory requirement for arms exports - including relevant ammunition, munitions, and parts and components - to be assessed on the basis of criteria including peace and security, human rights, international humanitarian law, terrorism, and transnational organized crime;
- Contains a mandatory refusal for transfers that pose unacceptable risks;
- Has a requirement to take into account in export licensing decisions the risk of serious acts of gender based violence and violence against children;
- Covers mandatory record keeping and regular reporting on authorisations;
- Has regulation where feasible of imports, transit, and trans-shipment;
- Contains a requirement to regulate arms brokering;
- Has strong provisions to prevent diversion of weapons to illicit trafficking or use, and to assess the risk of diversion in export risk assessments;
- Provides encouragement to cooperate to prevent arms transfers becoming subject to corrupt practices.

The Arms Trade Treaty will have a meaningful humanitarian impact globally:

- The Treaty will save lives: a man, woman, or child dies every minute from armed violence. Two-thirds die in countries not officially in conflict. Poorly regulated or illegal flows of weapons destabilise societies, states, and regions;
- The Treaty will promote development: violence fuelled by unregulated or illegal weapons diverts resources from schools, healthcare, and critical infrastructure. It undermines sustainable development and erodes stability;
- The Treaty will combat terrorism and crime: when terrorists benefit from the unfettered proliferation of weapons they threaten the security of not only the countries where they base themselves, but also their neighbours and the rest of the world;
- The Treaty will reduce human suffering: up to three-quarters of grave human rights abuse involve misuse of weapons. The Treaty requires governments

not to authorise arms exports if there is an unacceptable risk they could be used to violate human rights or international humanitarian law;

- The Treaty will protect the legitimate arms trade: it fully recognises States' rights to self-defence and their legitimate interests in producing, exporting, and importing weapons. International industrial collaboration in arms production will be promoted through the introduction of common standards.

Looking ahead, we recognise that it is important to maintain the momentum and wide support for the Arms Trade Treaty. We will encourage as many countries as possible to sign and ratify the Treaty to ensure that it enters into force as soon as possible. We will then consider how the UK can help others to implement the Treaty and set up their own durable and effective export control regimes in line with the Treaty criteria and aims.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Dawson

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