

An Effective Arms Trade Treaty
NGO presentation to the 62nd General Assembly First Committee
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Thank you Mr Chairperson,

I am going to tell you a story about a 13-year-old boy by the name of Abraham Koroma from West Africa.

In 2003 his village was attacked by armed men. His parents were killed, and Abraham ran away with his little sister. They were caught by the men, who shot Abraham's sister dead, right in front of him. He was forced – at gunpoint – to join them as a child soldier.

Abraham spent months with the armed men before he managed to escape. Still in his uniform and in possession of his gun, the boy was taken by police to a refugee camp.

That was 5 years ago. Abraham is now 18 and still receiving treatment for his injuries. He is angry and he thinks about committing suicide.

Because of the uncontrolled arms trade, Abraham lost his family and his childhood.

These human rights abuses are the reason why the NGOs have been campaigning for many years for an ATT.

States are also concerned about human rights, and that is why 153 states voted for a resolution to work towards an Arms Trade Treaty.

We need an ATT to prevent international arms transfers if they are likely to be used for serious abuses of human rights. So hopefully we won't have to hear other stories like this one about Abraham.

Mr Chairperson

Some states believe the ATT is a European club. This is not true. The original movers were Cambodia, Mali and Costa Rica. And, 80% of the States voted last year to start the ATT process.

Meanwhile, a record-breaking 100 states have submitted their views on the kind of Treaty they want.

Mr Chairperson,

An ATT is feasible! Most countries in the world are already covered by a regional or multilateral agreement on conventional arms. The ATT will fill the gaps and weaknesses in those existing schemes, and provide coverage for the regions without any agreements at present.

Also, we can build on some existing mechanisms, such as the Conventional Arms Register.

An effective Arms Trade Treaty would set minimum common standards. This will provide a ‘level playing field’ for those wishing to compete for business in the legitimate international arms trade.

An ATT should cover all conventional weapons, and all types of international transfers, including:

- exports, imports, transshipment,
- transit and brokering.
- government-to-government transfers,
- commercial sales,
- as well as weapons that are leased or loaned.

An ATT will **NOT** prevent states from acquiring arms for legitimate defense purposes. It should recognise the right of states to self-defence, and also their responsibility to provide security to their people.

This green booklet contains the Global Principles for Arms Transfers drafted by the NGOs. The principles reflect the existing responsibilities of states under international law.

An ATT must have at its heart:

- respect for human rights,
- international humanitarian law
- and sustainable development.

It was encouraging to see, in the analysis of the state submissions on the ATT, that 75% recognised the key importance of human rights in assessing potential arms transfers.

The Group of Government Experts has a rare opportunity and responsibility, and should make the most out of it.

A record number of states have expressed interest in the ATT, so the GGE process should receive input from these states through, for example, regional or intersessional meetings. Civil society would also welcome the opportunity to offer its expertise to the GGE.

A strong and effective global Arms Trade Treaty is feasible, and is urgently needed. The process towards an ATT should be open, fair and inclusive.

Above all -- it should bring **hope** to those who suffer the effects of irresponsible arms transfers, like Abraham and his family did.

Mr. Chairperson, as our former President Dr. Nelson Mandela once said, “It always seems impossible until it’s done.”

I thank you