



Challenges Facing Arab Countries Joining Arms Trade Treaty

Background

Conventional weapons continue to devastate the lives of civilians in the Arab region. Civilians bear the brunt of the uncontrolled flow of weapons and ammunition to terrorist groups, armed movements, and criminal gangs in the region. Similarly, many countries around the world persist in supplying and exporting arms to parties involved in armed conflicts, without adequate accountability or oversight. Adherence to international standards regarding the promotion of responsible arms trade is crucial in the Arab region.

Despite these pressing issues, very few Arab countries have joined the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) - namely Mauritania, Lebanon, and Palestine, while Libya, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates are the only signatories. This can be attributed to several challenges and obstacles. Many arms-importing countries feel the ATT would restrict their ability to obtain weapons for legitimate national defense purposes, and decision-makers have difficulty grasping the potential benefits of the ATT, such as its role in controlling weapon proliferation and reducing human suffering.

Moreover, some countries in the region are aware of the legally binding nature of the ATT but are unwilling to proceed with ratification or accession until a thorough analysis of the treaty's text is conducted in accordance with national legislation - a time-consuming process.

Additionally, many countries lack the qualified personnel necessary to implement ATT and fulfill its obligations. League of Arab States has also been perceived as underperforming in its role of preserving Arab peace and security and curbing the illicit flow of conventional weapons to various conflict areas, with weak information-sharing and exchange among regional countries.

A common factor underlying these challenges, and a major reason for countries' reluctance to join the treaty, is the weakness of civil society organizations and the failure to provide them with sufficient technical or financial support. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness of the Treaty's provisions and advocating for countries to join the ATT.

Event Importance

The importance of this issue is amplified by escalating suffering of the Arab peoples due to the proliferation of conventional weapons in the region, leading to grave human rights violations. Weapons falling into the wrong hands perpetuate armed conflicts, escalate killings, and destroy civilian infrastructure. Therefore, there is an urgent need to understand the challenges and obstacles preventing Arab countries from joining Arms Trade Treaty, and to work towards overcoming them, given Treaty's importance in promoting responsible arms trade in the Arab region. The event is structured around four main axes:

1. Spread of conventional weapons in Arab countries and the resulting violations.



2. Reasons for necessity of Arab countries joining ATT.
3. Challenges and obstacles preventing Arab countries from joining ATT.
4. Role of civil society organizations in overcoming challenges and obstacles to Treaty's universality in the Arab region.

Event Agenda

Topic word time

Topic	Duration
Introduction	5 minutes
Spread of conventional weapons in Arab countries and the resulting violations.	15 minutes
Reasons for necessity of Arab countries joining ATT	15 minutes
Challenges and obstacles preventing Arab countries from joining ATT	15 minutes
Role of civil society organizations in overcoming challenges and obstacles to Treaty's universality in the Arab region	15 minutes
Interactive Questions	10 minutes
Recommendations	5 minutes

Event Details

Date: August 20, 2024, at 1 pm (Geneva Time)

Event Duration: 80 minutes

Location: Virtually on Zoom

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Zoom Meeting link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83111215222?pwd=oi882q4nto4E8sLgVbWWejWf2mD5cq.1>

Meeting ID: 831 1121 5222

Passcode: 672837