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Arms Trade Treaty  
**Eleventh Conference of States Parties**  
Geneva, 25 - 29 August 2025

**PANAMA WORKING PAPER**  
**STRENGTHENING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE ARMS TRADE TREATY (ATT)**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is the first legally binding multilateral instrument that regulates the international trade in conventional arms. Its core purpose of reducing human suffering cannot be achieved without the active and transformative engagement of young people in deliberative and decision-making processes taking place in the framework of the ATT.

2. The present working paper seeks to raise awareness of the positive contributions of youth as the ultimate force for change to make the world safer and more secure for all by developing new ideas for the ATT implementation and universalization. It also offers practical proposals that States Parties and other stakeholders to further strengthen the meaningful participation, engagement and leadership of young people in this forum during the next CSP-cycles.

**II. WHY YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MATTERS IN THE ATT?**

3. Today, the global population of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 numbers 1.2 billion, accounting for 16 percent of the world's population. Many of them live in conflict-affected settings.

4. The widespread availability of conventional arms, their ammunition, parts and components due to irresponsible arms transfers is a key enabler of armed violence, whether in the context of armed conflict or urban violence, including violence associated with gangs, organized crime and non-state actors.

5. Youth around the world are among the most adversely affected by armed violence. They suffer disruption to their lives with serious and far-reaching repercussions for their development and safety, and their access to basic services, including education, healthcare and social protection, as well as their enjoyment of all human rights are compromised. Young men and boys are more exposed to the risk of being killed, while young women and girls are more at risk of being sexually assaulted and being victims of femicides.

6. The diversion of arms to unauthorized end users or for unlawful end use, and unregulated and illicit arms transfers are also conducive factors of a broad range of violations and abuses against youth, including targeted killings, torture, kidnapping, rape, gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, forced recruitment and use of children and young people in conflict or into gangs and organized crime networks, forced marriage, slavery and forced labour, among others.

7. Despite this, youth remain significantly underrepresented in efforts toward the achievement of the object and the purpose of the ATT. At the same time, there has been limited discussion on how the ATT can help prevent violence against them.

8. The important role of youth in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security have been reaffirmed by UN Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security, UN General Assembly resolution 74/64 entitled “Youth, disarmament and non-proliferation”, and their subsequent resolutions, as well as in the Pact for the Future<sup>1</sup>, particularly its Action 20.

9. Young people have a right to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them. Their perspectives are forward-looking and grounded in their special needs and experiences. Therefore, youth engagement in the ATT, whether through digital storytelling, grassroots organizing or policy advocacy, is crucial to devise innovative and sustainable solutions to the current challenges, thus enhancing its inclusivity, effectiveness and long-term impact.

10. During the current CSP-cycle, there has been an increased attention to youth considerations and the need to facilitate their involvement more systematically in the deliberations held within the ATT. For example, the working paper presented by the President of the ATT CSP11 entitled “Universalization as a priority”<sup>2</sup> acknowledges that special attention should be given to the inclusion of youth voices and leadership in ATT processes and encourages States Parties and other stakeholders to promote their leadership and meaningful participation in ATT-related efforts.

11. In today’s digital age, where social media and other digital platforms play a central part in shaping public discourse and support, the ATT has a timely opportunity to raise awareness and amplify the messages, connect meaningfully with younger audiences, and empower them to take an active role in advancing the object and the purpose of the ATT, which can complement existing outreach programmes.

12. Youth-led structures, groups and initiatives, such as the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)’s Youth4Disarmament Initiative and the International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative (IHLYI), have proven to be an important source of leadership and agency for young people and for bridging the gap between disarmament instruments and local realities.

13. Other disarmament fora are taking important steps in creating space for the positive contributions of youth. These good practices could be replicated within the framework of the ATT in order to institutionalize the meaningful participation, engagement and leadership of young people.

### **III. WALKING THE TALK: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATES PARTIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

14. The next CSP-cycles provide a great occasion to explore pathways to mainstream youth considerations and strengthen their participation in ATT-related meetings and activities. In this regard, States Parties and other stakeholders can consider the following practical proposals:

- All Working Group Chairs and facilitators are encouraged to consider youth perspectives in their sessions;
- Invite the Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Treaty Universalization (WGTU) to foster partnerships with youth-led initiatives with a view to develop and promote youth-led universalization strategies, including through digital platforms;

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<sup>1</sup> See UNGA Resolution 79/1.

<sup>2</sup> See the working paper presented by the President of the ATT CSP11 entitled “Universalization as a priority” (document ATT/CSP11/2025/PRES/825/Conf.WP.UNIV).

- Encourage States Parties to engage with relevant ministries or other national authorities dedicated to youth in order to enhance interagency cooperation in the effective implementation of ATT provisions;
- Invite States Parties to consider exploring options to include youth-related aspects in ATT initial and annual reports;
- States Parties and other stakeholders with projects supported by the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) are encouraged to consider to integrate youth perspectives within their projects;
- Invite States Parties and other stakeholders attending ATT Working Groups, preparatory meetings and CSP itself to include youth representatives in their delegations;
- Encourage States Parties and other stakeholders to include young people, particularly from affected communities, as panellists in plenary sessions, side events and other fora;
- Invite States Parties and other stakeholders to consider the possibility of exploring additional measures that could effectively advance youth participation and engagement in the ATT in a sustained and structured manner, with options including the establishment of a platform, taking as an example those launched in other disarmament regimes, such as the CTBTO Youth Group;
- States Parties and other stakeholders are encouraged to support and fund research that helps increase understanding of youth specific impacts in relation to arms transfers; and
- Strengthen the link between the ATT and the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

#### **IV. PROPOSAL FOR ATT CSP11 DRAFT DECISION**

15. The following language is suggested for its inclusion in the ATT CSP11 final report: *“The Conference welcomed the working paper submitted by Panama on Strengthening Youth Participation in the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and encourage State Parties and other stakeholders to consider youth perspectives in the work of the ATT and explore measures to strengthen the meaningful participation, engagement and leadership of young people in ATT implementation and universalization efforts during the next CSP-cycles.”*

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