



Arms Trade Treaty  
**Ninth Conference of States Parties**  
Geneva, 21 - 25 August 2023

**ATT WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING**  
**DRAFT REPORT TO CSP9**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This report to the Ninth Conference of ATT States Parties (CSP9) has been prepared by the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) Secretariat in its capacity as interim Chair of the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR).<sup>1</sup> The report reflects the work of the Working Group in the period between CSP8 and CSP9 and the discussions in the WGTR meetings of 16 February 2023 and 11 May 2023. It includes references to the documents that were discussed and an overview of the outcomes of the February and May meetings. Giving effect to these outcomes, the report subsequently provides the recommendations that the WGTR puts forward for consideration by CSP9.

2. One document is attached to this report:

- 1) Annex A - Draft proposed mandate for the WGTR for the period September 2023 - August 2024.

**16 FEBRUARY WGTR MEETING**

3. On 16 February 2023, the WGTR held its first of two meetings of the CSP9 preparatory process.

4. The WGTR adopted the draft annotated agenda for the meeting, which was based on the standing agenda items and the recurring and specific tasks for the WGTR endorsed by States Parties at CSP8. The WGTR also considered the introductory paper for the meeting, which provided the background of the given tasks, summarized past proposals and discussions, set out elements for discussion and put forward proposals for consideration by WGTR participants.

5. The details and outcomes of the meeting can be found in the ATT Secretariat's report of the 16 February meeting, which was prepared for the second meeting of the WGTR on 11 May 2023 ([ATT/CSP9.WGTR/2023/CHAIR/752/M1.Rep](https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1cab9ut7b)). A video recording of the meeting is also available on the following webpage: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1cab9ut7b>.

**11 MAY WGTR MEETING**

6. On 11 May 2023, the WGTR held its second meeting of the CSP9 preparatory process and adopted the draft annotated agenda for the meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> The ATT Secretariat has acted as interim WGTR Chair and facilitated WGTR meeting throughout the CSP9 cycle, because despite extensive consultations by the CSP9 President and the ATT Secretariat, no eligible and willing State Party had been secured to assume the role of WGTR (co-) Chair.

7. Under the first agenda item (*State of play of compliance with reporting obligations and challenges concerning reporting*), the Working Group reviewed the status of reporting based on a presentation by the ATT Secretariat. The presentation demonstrated that many States Parties are still not in compliance with their legal obligation to submit initial and annual reports under Article 13 of the ATT, but that there is some progress, with a number of States Parties submitting several annual reports at the same time to clear their backlog.

8. After the presentation, States Parties were invited to share their challenges to submitting timely and accurate reports, as well as good practices in compiling and submitting reports. As in previous WGTR meetings, the beneficiaries of Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF)-funded projects related to improving reporting capacities were specifically encouraged to share their experience and lessons learned.

9. A number of participants raised the challenge of personnel changes and indicated that sustainable reporting requires the creation of institutional memory, streamlining processes between various agencies, and identifying synergies between different global and regional transparency instruments. As a potentially helpful tool for States in the development of national reporting procedures, the ATT Secretariat mentioned the working paper on national-level measures to facilitate compliance with international reporting obligations and commitments, which is available on the ATT website in all UN languages (<https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/reporting.html>).

10. Some participants also explained how global events can have an impact on reporting and on the decision to make annual reports only available to other States Parties, or to withhold certain information for national security purposes.

11. One participant raised the challenge of utilizing the reporting templates for States with very few arms transfers and suggested to consider simplified templates or stand-alone nil reports.

12. As a means to deal with reporting challenges, participants also addressed the role of the VTF and other international assistance providers. A few States Parties spoke about their experience with reporting assistance funded under the VTF, as well as prospective projects that need to enable the competent authorities to honour their commitment to transparency.

13. Following the exchange of reporting challenges and experiences, the Working Group turned to the implementation of the outreach strategy on reporting. In that context, the ATT Secretariat briefed participants about the engagement of the CSP9 President and the ATT Secretariat with those States Parties that are in arrears with their reporting obligations.

14. In that regard, on behalf of the CSP9 President, the ATT Secretariat sent individual letters to 23 States Parties that have not submitted one or more Annual Reports, and 23 States Parties that have not submitted an Initial Report and one or more Annual Reports, reminding them of their reporting obligations and listing all their outstanding reports. In response to these reminders, at the time of the meeting, one State Party had already submitted five outstanding annual reports, while at least three others had indicated they were in the process of doing so. In addition to these reporting reminders, the ATT Secretariat also mentioned its Implementation Support Project, funded by the European Union, in which it conducts capacity building workshops for national and regional ATT experts, which also deal with the Treaty' reporting obligations.

15. As the last specific task under the first agenda item, regarding the project of voluntary practical bilateral and regional assistance with reporting (peer-to-peer), the ATT Secretariat briefed participants about the status of the initiative to identify regional reporting champions for outreach purposes and

the informal breakfast meeting on reporting that took place before the WGTR meeting.

16. Regarding the identification of regional champions, the ATT Secretariat reported that it had written a letter to a number of States Parties with a good track record on reporting in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania, to inquire about their interest to take on a role as reporting champion. Several of those States had already responded positively to this request at the time of the meeting, while others were still considering the proposal, and some explained that they were not able at that point in time to assume such a role.

17. Concerning the concrete expectations of “regional champions”, the ATT Secretariat reiterated that the level of engagement of regional reporting champions with States in arrears would largely fall to the States in question themselves. As indicated in the February meeting, regional champions could undertake active steps to encourage States to submit their reports and/or share their national good practices in bilateral exchanges, or simply inform States in their region that they are available to provide advice on how to gather and process relevant information and how to submit reports.

18. The ATT Secretariat also indicated that it would further explore the possible opportunities with the States Parties concerned. As a first step, those States were invited to the informal breakfast meeting on reporting which the ATT Secretariat organized to bring together State Party delegates in need of practical advice on reporting with their peers in States Parties with experience on this subject. As indicated, this informal meeting took place just before the Working Group meeting and saw the participating delegates engage in very practical peer-to-peer exchanges in English, French and Spanish language groups.

19. In the discussion that followed, a few States Parties expressed their commitment to the role of regional champion and expressed their readiness to undertake regional outreach. Participants also suggested that regional organisations could be approached to support such outreach, which was acknowledged by those present.

20. **Under the second item on the agenda (*Substantive reporting and transparency issues under article 13 of the ATT*)**, participants were invited to exchange practices, challenges and limitations concerning substantive issues about the reporting obligations that could benefit from consideration by the WGTR. In that regard, reference was made to issues which participants had addressed systematically in previous meetings, such as public availability of annual and initial reports, synergies with other reporting obligations and the aggregation of data.

21. Concerning synergies with other reporting obligations, one participant suggested that this topic should be a standing point of attention in every Working Group meeting.

22. Concerning public availability, in response to questions, reference was made to the guidance on this issue in question 41 of the voluntary ‘FAQ’-type guidance document on the annual reporting obligation.

23. As no proposals were submitted for alterations or additional questions and answers for this ‘FAQ’-type guidance document on the annual reporting obligation, this topic was not discussed.

24. **Under the third agenda item (*Transparency issues and information exchange*)**, the Working Group resumed the discussion on the continuing role of the Information Exchange Platform (IEP), in view of the limited interventions on this topic in the February meeting and the potential importance of the IEP in the context of the review of the ATT programme of work. To inform the discussion, the ATT Secretariat provided a short presentation of the IEP, in reference to the guidance document on

the use of the IEP that is available in the Restricted Area of the ATT website. Following this presentation, a few participants acknowledged the relevance of the IEP, for example in the context of the DIEF, and made some suggestions to enhance its use. In particular the suggestion was made that an e-mail would be sent to States Parties and signatory States whenever an announcement is introduced in the IEP.

25. As the last specific task under the third agenda item, the Working Group resumed its discussion on the way forward concerning the project of an online searchable database. While a few participants expressed support for the project and were ready to mandate the ATT Secretariat to obtain cost estimates of a searchable database, other participants argued that this project is not opportune at this moment. In that respect, reference was made to the operational cost of such a database, the existence of similar databases and the low rate of reporting, which should be the primary focus of the Working Group.

26. **Under the fourth and final agenda item (*WGTR mandate between CSP9 and CSP10*)**, the Working Group dealt with the draft proposal for the mandate of the Working Group in the period between CSP9 and CSP10. This draft reflected the previous mandate, albeit with two specific tasks still under consideration: 1) the task to further examine ways for the information exchange platform to support the work of the WGTR and the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI), as well as cooperation between States Parties; and 2) the task to further examine the feasibility of a functionality that makes the information in annual reports available in a searchable database that allows for queries and extracting data. The first of these tasks was included in the draft proposal with the stipulation that the final wording of the relevant item in the draft mandate submitted to CSP9 would depend on the outcome of the discussion on this topic during the 11 May meeting. The second task was included in the draft proposal with the stipulation that it would only be included in the draft mandate submitted to CSP9 if there would be significant support to take this project further during the 11 May meeting. Participants were also made aware of the reference in the draft mandate to the ongoing discussions about the review of the ATT Programme of Work, as the draft mandate instructs the Working Group to explore possibilities of aligning its work with the mainstream work of the WGETI when it will consider its mandate for the period between CSP10 and CSP11.

27. One participant addressed the draft proposal and highlighted the need for attention to capacity-building challenges and initiatives concerning reporting, including through the VTF, as well as to coordination and possible synergies with the WGETI, in light of the review of the ATT Programme of Work.

28. No comments were made about the two specific tasks still under consideration. In light of its relevance to the review of the ATT Programme of Work, the specific task concerning the information exchange platform is maintained in the draft mandate in Annex A. As during the 11 May meeting only a few participants still signalled support to take the project regarding a searchable database further, this specific task is no longer included in the draft mandate in Annex A.

29. A video recording of the meeting is available on the following webpage: <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1f/k1f7w63c13>.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CSP9**

30. Based on the above and considering the work undertaken by the WGTR to fulfil its mandate for the period between CSP8 and CSP9, the Working Group recommend that CSP9:

- 1) recalls that transparency is a key purpose of the Treaty, which States Parties need to observe in their national implementation of Treaty obligations, as well as their exchanges and initiatives within the ATT process;*
- 2) reiterates that reporting is a fundamental legal obligation of the Treaty, and that submitting initial and annual reports is an indicator of the commitment of a State Party to the Treaty;*
- 3) expresses its concern for the continuing low rate of compliance with the reporting obligations;*
- 4) urges States Parties that are not fully compliant with their reporting obligations to submit their reports or, in case of difficulty to do so, to make use of the available assistance mechanisms in order to achieve full compliance with the Treaty's reporting obligations;*
- 5) encourages all relevant stakeholders to continue to implement the Outreach Strategy on Reporting that was adopted at CSP4, and to use all available means to actively engage with States Parties that are not fully compliant with the reporting obligations, in order to raise awareness on the mandatory nature of reporting and to provide assistance upon request;*
- 6) expresses its continuing support for the project of voluntary bilateral and regional assistance with reporting (peer-to-peer), including the voluntary regional reporting champions initiative, and requests the ATT Secretariat to develop this project further;*
- 7) encourages States Parties and signatory States to register online for access to the IT platform and make use of the information exchange platform;*
- 8) endorses the mandate for the WGTR in the period between CSP9 and CSP10, as included in Annex A of this report, and highlights the need for the Working Group to explore possibilities of aligning its work with the mainstream work of WGETI.*

**WAY FORWARD BEYOND CSP9**

31. The proposed way forward for the work of the WGTR is included in the draft mandate for the Working Group in the period between CSP9 and CSP10, which is attached to this report as Annex A. The WGTR will continue to focus on enhancing compliance with the reporting requirements, which is one of the fundamental obligations of the Treaty, as well as on discussing mechanisms, processes or formats that facilitate information exchange and topics related to the IT platform.

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**ANNEX A TO WGTR REPORT TO CSP9**  
**PROPOSED MANDATE FOR THE WGTR FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 2023 - AUGUST 2024**

In accordance with its Terms of Reference and Rule 42(2) of the ATT Rules of Procedure, the Working Group would like to propose for consideration by CSP9 the following tasks for further work in the period between CSP9 and CSP10:

1. The WGTR shall continue to conduct exchanges concerning the fulfilment of the reporting obligations in Article 13 of the ATT and the broader issue of transparency in the international trade in conventional arms. In its meetings, the WGTR shall, as a minimum, deal with the following standing agenda items:
  - a. State of play of compliance with reporting obligations and challenges concerning reporting;
  - b. Substantive issues concerning reporting under Article 13 of the ATT;
  - c. Transparency and information exchange; and
  - d. WGTR mandate in the period between CSP10 and CSP11.
  
2. With regard to the **state of play of compliance with reporting obligations and challenges concerning reporting**, the WGTR will:
  - a. review the status of reporting at every meeting, thereby focusing on the progress that has been made in comparison to the previous status updates;
  - b. invite participants of States Parties that are in non-compliance with their ATT reporting obligations to present their challenges to submitting timely and accurate initial and annual reports, as well as participants of States Parties that have complied with their reporting obligations to present their experiences in compiling and submitting reports, including beneficiaries of projects funded by the Voluntary Trust Fund (or other international assistance providers) related to improving reporting capacities;
  - c. monitor the implementation of the “Outreach strategy on reporting”<sup>2</sup> and the project of voluntary practical bilateral and regional assistance with reporting (peer-to-peer); and
  - d. give participants the opportunity to propose and discuss other means to promote reporting and support States Parties in addressing their reporting challenges.
  
3. With regard to **substantive issues concerning reporting under Article 13 of the ATT**, the WGTR will:
  - a. give participants the opportunity to exchange practices, challenges and limitations concerning substantive issues about the reporting obligations that could benefit from consideration by the WGTR; and
  - b. consider submitted proposals for alterations or additional questions and answers for

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<sup>2</sup> The “Outreach strategy on reporting” is included as Annex A in the WGTR Co-Chairs’ Draft Report to CSP4, available on the ATT website, in the Working Groups section of the CSP4 Conference documents page: <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/conference-documents-csp-4.html>.

the 'FAQ'-type guidance document on the annual reporting obligation, adopted at CSP3 and updated at CSP5 and CSP8.<sup>3</sup>

4. With regard to **transparency issues and information exchange**, the WGTR will:
  - a. give participants the opportunity to exchange practices, challenges and limitations concerning information exchanges that are required or encouraged by the Treaty, both on the policy level, as well as on the operational level;
  - b. monitor the use of the online reporting functionality and the information exchange platform on the ATT website and further examine ways for the platform to support the work of the WGTR and the WGETI as well as cooperation between States Parties;
  - c. consider proposals to harness information from the initial and annual reports in a manner that allows follow-up on these reports.
  
5. With regard to the **WGTR mandate in the period between CSP10 and CSP11**, the WGTR will review the relevance of the aforementioned agenda items in the light of the state of play of ATT transparency and reporting and explore possibilities of aligning its work with the mainstream work of WGETI, with a view to preparing a proposal for consideration by CSP10.

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<sup>3</sup> The 'FAQ'-type guidance document on the annual reporting obligation is available on the ATT website, on the Reporting Requirements page: <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/reporting.html>.