



**High Level Opening Panel
Third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty**

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Mr President, Distinguished delegates,

I am honoured to be here with you today speaking on behalf of the Control Arms Coalition.

I take this opportunity to bring to you a picture from Yemen, which now for more than two years has been under destruction, fuelled directly by weapons that flow in large quantities to the warring parties in Yemen.

You may not know much about the civilian victims or what is happening to the Yemenis enduring the daily onslaught of the war. Sadly many ordinary Yemenis have come to know some of your countries through the weapons that have destroyed their homes and killed their families.

In Yemen, The Saudi and Emirati led coalition , Ansar Allah armed group (Hothis) and their ally former President Saleh, President Abd Rabu Mansoor Hadi forces and armed groups loyal to him, all warring parties without exception are committing horrific violations against civilians and civilian objects. Kalashnikovs, landmines, mortars, ballistic missiles, Cluster bombs, F-16s –, the range of weapons used against civilians is wide.

For more than two years, Mwatana Organization for Human Rights has documented hundreds of serious violations of international humanitarian law by the various parties to the conflict.

Thousands of civilians, mostly women and children, have been killed.

Hundreds of homes, dozens of schools, hospitals and health centres, shops, bridges, roads, corridors, mosques and cultural and archaeological sites have been targeted.

It seems no one, no place, no home is safe.

Much of the humanitarian aid, health and medical supplies, and educational support sent by well-meaning countries and organizations has never reached the people who needed it. The sad irony is that, instead, weapons were sent, delivered by warring parties, to take our lives and destroy our very limited infrastructure.

This conflict and the conduct of the combatants have created the worst global humanitarian crises in the world today. 17 million Yemenis face starvation and lack food security. Two million people are internally displaced, of which more than a million are children. The health system is in free-fall. Cholera has killed more than 2,000 Yemenis and half a million more are infected, making it the worst cholera epidemic in modern history.

None of this is the result of a natural disaster. It is, all of it, man-made, conflict-made. It is the responsibility firstly of those directly involved in the conflict, but also of those providing political cover and material support, particularly support with weapons and military equipment.

Saudi Arabia is one of the largest arms importers in the world and Yemen remains - since the Saudi and its military alliance intervention - home to the world's largest humanitarian crisis and a shocking record of the most serious violations of international humanitarian law.

This sadly reflects the triumph of economic interests over the blood of innocent people.

It is shocking that 19 States Parties and 3 Signatory States agreed to sell or deliver arms to Saudi Arabia after the outbreak of war in Yemen, in many cases in the full knowledge that these will be or are likely to be used in Yemen.

Yemenis are eager for life, they do not like war. They continue to choose life at the time when death is exported to them from every direction. You must support this choice of life rather than push the people of Yemen to war. A peaceful solution in Yemen is still very possible, so please, I implore you, be a leading hand to peace, and don't allow arms trades to stand in the way.

My story is from Yemen. It is a terrible story, though sadly not unique. My colleagues here this week from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Caribbean, and the Pacific can equally share stories of arms-fuelled suffering that continues from war zones in cities and rural areas.

On behalf of Control Arms, my organisation Mwatana and civilians suffering everywhere throughout the world, I call upon you as States Parties and Signatories to the ATT to:

- Remember that the purpose of the ATT is to reduce human suffering, and to focus your discussions this week on how to achieve this.
- Support transparency to help ensure accountability and reduce corruption and the diversion of arms.



And I call on *all* States to immediately stop all forms of support for the conflict in Yemen, including the supply of any arms that might be used by *any* participant to the conflict. I call on all States to support the establishment of an international independent inquiry to investigate the violations of all parties to the conflict as a first step towards accountability and to end impunity. And I call on all States to focus their efforts on delivering a political solution and humanitarian assistance to the catastrophe in Yemen.

Thank you.