

MAG Statement

Agenda Item 7 - Implementation

Check against delivery.

Thank you, Mr. President.

We welcome this year's thematic focus on interagency cooperation, recognising that proper regulation of the arms trade is only possible as a shared endeavour. In the same spirit, we thank you and your predecessors for continued inclusion of civil society and technical experts in this important dialogue. MAG has engaged with the ATT process since early in its negotiation and has actively supported its implementation, working with states across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Asia-Pacific region, with a focus on strengthening measures that prevent diversion.

In ten years since the ATT entered into force, enormous progress has been made in the area of diversion prevention through strengthening systems and processes, infrastructure, and international and inter-agency cooperation. We congratulate the many states who have shown incredible commitment to strengthening their national controls, as well as those who have facilitated this essential work through international cooperation and assistance. MAG is proud to have contributed to these achievements through our partnerships at national, regional and international level, alongside other implementing partners and policymakers and wider civil society, regional bodies, international organisations and UN agencies.

MAG always aims to address the causes and consequences of conflict and armed violence, with a focus on preventing the harm caused by conventional weapons. In striving to save lives, ease suffering, protect human rights, and contribute to sustainable peace and security, our work is far broader than our efforts to prevent diversion; we also work extensively with communities in conflict-affected and post-conflict areas to reduce the humanitarian harm caused by explosive ordnance. In doing so, we see every day the devastating effects of conventional weapons on civilians.

Mr. President,

We applaud the ambition in your working paper to explore the role of the ATT to advance work on addressing the link between conventional arms transfers and the risk of serious acts of gender-based violence and serious acts of violence against women and children. This demonstrates the essential role of the ATT as an instrument of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, in line with the Treaty's opening principles. In this regard, we call on all States Parties to uphold all the commitments made in Articles 6 and 7, and on observer states to implement similar controls.

In 2023, civilian deaths in armed conflict increased by 72 per cent from the previous year.ⁱ Given the continued spread of conflict in a number of countries and regions, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gaza, Myanmar, the Sahel, Sudan and Ukraine, we can sadly expect this trend to continue.

In many circumstances, civilians represent the 90% of casualties in conflict, while damage to civilian objects and infrastructure in multiple conflicts is extensive, with catastrophic reverberating effects.ⁱⁱ This suggests warfare is being conducted in a manner that fails to distinguish between civilian objects and military targets – constituting a serious breach of customary international humanitarian law. Exporting states must ensure with each transfer that Article 7 is truly being upheld, as well as the Article 6 prohibitions in the gravest situations.

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We also encourage states to consider the humanitarian purpose and principles of the ATT and refrain from authorising transfers that, despite their apparent compliance with the letter of the ATT, might result in such widespread civilian harm.

The full potential of the ATT can only be realised through full implementation of all its provisions in all circumstances, with objective consideration of all relevant factors. In a complex global context, dedication and clear-eyed reflection will be needed to build on the achievements of the past decade. We feel sure that the ATT community is equal to this task.

I thank you, Mr President.

ⁱ 'Protection of civilians in armed conflict – Report of the Secretary-General' (14 May 2024) UN Doc S/2024/385, para 6.

ⁱⁱ Among others, *ibid*, para 8.