**Statement to The Working Group on ATT Universality**

**Morning or Evening Statement depending on the agenda on**

**Challenges related to strengthening the universality of the Arms Trade Treaty in Arab countries**

**Thank you, Mr. President,**

Illicit arms trafficking has become a major feature in the Arab region, and it is an undoubted obstacle to the settlement of conflicts and armed disputes. Since 2011, weapons have flowed into many Arab countries, including Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq and Lebanon.

They have also been placed in the hands of terrorist and armed groups and in the hands of fighters accused of committing violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In contrast, the region hosts many open markets for the arms trade through which weapons are leaked to armed groups in many troubled countries around the world.

For example, Libya is considered a center for the arms trade in many African countries, as they have leaked to armed groups in Nigeria, Chad and some other African countries. The region also hosts major importers of conventional arms in The world, during the period from 2018 to 2023, estimates revealed that 30% of international arms transfers occurred in the Arab region.

Maat stresses that there are many challenges that prevent Arab countries from joining the Arms Trade Treaty and achieving its universality, as many Arab countries do not consider the issue of regulating conventional arms an urgent necessity at that time, and the spread of armed conflicts and civil wars within and between countries represents another challenge that hinders countries from joining the Arms Trade Treaty.

In addition to the lack of the institutional infrastructure and governmental capacity necessary to implement the treaty or the controls related to it in Arab countries.

The absence of a strong regional coordination mechanism may also pose a challenge to the universality of the treaty and its implementation in the region, as the League of Arab States has not taken serious steps to limit the spread of conventional arms in Arab conflict countries, and has not played sufficient roles in promoting the Arms Trade Treaty in light of the continued supply of weapons to parties to armed conflicts, including terrorist and armed groups, which has caused indescribable suffering to civilians.

Perhaps the common factor in all these challenges, which is a major reason for countries not joining the Arms Trade Treaty, is the small number of civil society organizations working on conventional arms issues in the Arab region, specifically those working on issues related to the Arms Trade Treaty, and the lack of adequate support for them, whether technical or financial, as civil society organizations are the ones who raise awareness of the provisions of the treaty and carry out advocacy efforts to urge countries to join the treaty. Finally, Mr. President, Maat for Peace confirms that it will work to implement awareness campaigns that help understand the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty and encourage non-party states to participate in it, and Maat also confirms its readiness to cooperate with all stakeholders interested in the universality of the treaty at the Arab level.