

## Arms Trade Treaty Remains Under Negotiation



Month long Arms Trade Treaty negotiations ended on 27 July 2012 without a new treaty. A successful treaty will create a global standard to prevent arms transfers to human rights abusers. The negotiation process was defeated by the manoeuvring and delaying tactics of Algeria, China, Egypt, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria and the USA. For the deal to be struck, all 193 United Nations members had to agree on the text of the agreement. The New York Times reported that

the U.S. faced pressure from gun-rights groups to walk away from the talks.

At present the estimated US\$ 60 billion global trade in conventional weapons is subject to fewer restrictions than the international trade in bananas. Amnesty International secretary General Salil Shetty said after the talks broke down: "With one person dying every minute because of armed violence, there is an imperative for powerful states to lead."

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a strong supporter of the Treaty. General Secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit commented: "Churches are concerned with the postponement in this long process, but we will plead for stronger controls of conventional weapons for a more peaceful and just world. Recent conflicts in several countries show the need for that. For decades, churches around the world have been calling for an Arms Trade Treaty that would protect people from irresponsible arms transfers. We will not let go of this demand."

The negotiations did clearly establish a norm that arms transfers must be banned where International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law is under threat. This norm has now been established with absolute clarity. There is an unflinching determination by the vast majority of the world's nations to ban the transfer of weapons when there is a substantial risk of human rights and humanitarian law violations.

The July 2012 treaty negotiations identified the building blocks that must appear in the eventual Arms Trade Treaty. These will be further strengthened by work within the partnership that now exists between civil society, international organisations and most states, as they continue to work together to get this treaty adopted before the end of 2012.

Negotiators from 90 countries delivered a joint statement that they were still resolved to achieve a new treaty before the end of 2012. "We are disappointed but we are not discouraged". The draft treaty will now be debated at the UN General Assembly in September 2012.

The [WCC reports](#) that 153 governments have agreed to adopt "the highest possible common international standard" for how conventional arms may be traded, and to stop arms for governments that "pose a threat to their own people or to other states" and to block shipments likely to be diverted to armed groups, organized crime or smugglers.

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