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Control Arms: Governments show overwhelming support for Arms Treaty

The Control Arms campaign: Oxfam International, Amnesty International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

Campaigners around the world are celebrating a significant victory after more than 80 governments participated in the UN consultation process on an Arms Trade Treaty.

The arms trade has no effective global controls at present. The proposed treaty would establish global standards that could save thousands of lives and hold irresponsible arms dealers accountable for their actions.

Speaking earlier this month at a conference in New York, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon confirmed the proposed treaty would establish common international standards for the import, export and transfer of all conventional arms. The treaty would make a major contribution to the attainment of humanitarian, human rights and development objectives worldwide, he said.

Control Arms says the work of global civil society must be recognised as a major contributing factor to the success of the treaty process so far. Control Arms coordinated more than 100 People's Consultations around the world where ordinary people shared their views on what the ATT should include.

The majority of states where consultations were held made submissions to the UN. The submissions showed widespread support for a treaty that protects human rights and sustainable development and enhances regional security.

"In the Philippines, where I'm from, the unregulated arms trade fuels widespread human rights abuses – politically motivated killings and attacks on freedom of speech are a regular occurrence." From the start, I knew the People's Consultation would be an important campaign to ensure that the voices of ordinary people were taken into account. It's really positive that governments have listened to people who suffer from armed violence on a daily basis," said Fred Lubang of Non-Violence International, representing the Control Arms campaign.

Over the past week, two major regional bodies have restated their support for the proposed Treaty. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Council of the European Union (EU) both issued public statements last week supporting moves towards more responsible and stringent regulation of the global arms trade.

"We welcome supportive statements from the UN Secretary-General, ECOWAS and the European Union. All governments must now ensure that human rights, international humanitarian law and sustainable development are at the heart of the Arms Trade Treaty so it can save lives," said Heather Sutton from Sou da Paz in Brazil.

"Heads of State will be meeting at the African Union, Southern African Development Community and Pacific Islands Forum meeting over the coming months – we want to see those regional organisations

pledging support for an Arms Trade Treaty. We hope all responses to the Secretary-General will be carefully considered when the UN General Assembly holds further discussions on the treaty in October this year," said Charles Nasibu-Bilali, a Congolese researcher and Control Arms campaigner.

Government submissions are now being collated for the Secretary-General, whose next move will be to establish a Group of Governmental Experts that will formally start work on the Arms Trade Treaty in 2008.

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For more information, please contact:

Oxfam International: Jennifer Abrahamson on +1 212 687 2150 (office) or +1 202 321 7858 (cell)

IANSA: Mark Marge on +1 646 257 4130 (office) or +1 646 207 6523 (cell)

Notes to editors:

Interviewees are available from People's Consultations in South Africa, Thailand, Democratic Republic of Congo, Brazil, India and Fiji. Requests for interviews in English, Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese can be facilitated. Short biographies of available interviewees are attached.

The Control Arms Campaign is a joint initiative by Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). Hundreds of non-governmental organisations from all over the world work with Control Arms to reduce arms proliferation and misuse.

The official deadline for government submissions on an Arms Trade Treaty to the UN Secretary General was 20 June but submissions will be accepted until the end of the month and issued as addendums to the main consultation document.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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