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**THE ARMS TRADE TREATY -
ASSESSING ITS IMPACT AND ACCELERATING ITS
IMPLEMENTATION**

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Thank you for your kind invitation and for the opportunity to join this distinguished panel for the discussion today on the Arms Trade Treaty. I have been asked to focus on the UK's approach to the Treaty, why we consider it important and what are the next steps.

First, the UK's approach to the ATT

The UK has played a leading role in the seven year campaign to secure the Treaty - the first arms control treaty to be adopted by the UN since the Comprehensive (Nuclear) Test Ban Treaty in 1996. From its conception, we have worked jointly with the defence industry and civil society, designing the process, building global support, and bringing home the vote in the General Assembly. The adoption of the ATT is truly a historic achievement and one of which we can rightly feel proud.

There has long been a clear need for responsible standards in the legal trade in conventional weapons, as well as for expanded international cooperation to combat the illicit trade. Our approach to establishing such standards has been based on 5 main principles:

- 1) the ATT should be legally binding, but nationally enforced; this would ensure the global consistency required to ensure the Treaty was effective, whilst maintaining state parties' right to take decisions on their own arms transfers;
- 2) the ATT should both regulate the international arms trade to ensure it is undertaken in a responsible manner, and it should address illegal arms flows;
- 3) to have maximum impact on the ground, the ATT should include the major current and future arms producers. That is why we went to great lengths to work for consensus. Iran, Syria and North Korea cynically insisted on blocking consensus despite all efforts to dissuade them. Nonetheless, the 154 votes in favour of the Treaty clearly demonstrate the overwhelming support for it;
- 4) States legitimately use conventional weapons for internal security, in the exercise of self-defence, and in support of peacekeeping operations. Trade for legitimate purposes should be protected;
- 5) The ATT should set a floor for governing the global arms trade, whilst allowing states to operate higher standards than prescribed by the ATT. An ATT should not legitimise low standards and should not compromise our fundamental values.

We consider that the outcome of the negotiations is a strong Treaty. No delegation secured everything they wanted. But we achieved much more than many thought possible. If adopted and implemented broadly, it will have real impact.

Secondly, what difference will the ATT make?

For the UK, the ATT will achieve 5 main goals when it comes into force:

- 1) **The Treaty will save lives.** A man, woman or child dies every minute from armed violence – over 740,000 each year. Two-thirds die in countries not officially in conflict. Poorly regulated or illegal flows of weapons destabilise societies, states and regions. The treaty will help stop arms from reaching vulnerable regions, promoting stability and reducing ungoverned space;
- 2) **The Treaty will promote development.** Violence fuelled by unregulated or illegal weapons diverts resources from schools, healthcare and critical infrastructure. It undermines sustainable

development and erodes stability. Conflict costs Africa 18bn dollars per year, roughly the same as it receives in Overseas Development Assistance;

- 3) **The Treaty will combat terrorism and crime.** When terrorists benefit from the unfettered proliferation of weapons, they threaten the security of not only the countries where they base themselves but also their neighbours and the rest of the world;
- 4) **The Treaty will reduce human suffering.** Up to three-quarters of grave human rights abuse involve misuse of weapons. The Treaty requires governments not to authorise arms exports if there is an unacceptable risk they could be used to violate human rights or international humanitarian law;
- 5) **The Treaty will protect the legitimate arms trade.** It will allow states to access and acquire weaponry for their legitimate self-defence, whilst at the same time helping to ensure that this legitimate process is not circumvented, abused or exploited by unscrupulous arms traders. International industrial collaboration in arms production will be promoted through the introduction of common standards.

The ATT will not solve all the problems caused by unregulated and illicit arms but it does offer the prospect of a better future to millions who live in the shadow of conflict.

Finally, what should be the next steps?

Only when exporters and importers implement its provisions with care and vigour will the Treaty start to deliver on these promises of safety, security and prosperity needed by so many.

We now need a sustained and concerted campaign to persuade governments around the globe, particularly the major current and future arms exporters, to sign and ratify the Treaty, and to secure as soon as possible the fifty ratifications required to bring it into force. Like the negotiations on the Treaty itself, this will take time and require the considerable efforts and persistence of a broad coalition of Treaty supporters, Parliamentarians, civil society and industry. Universal adherence to the ATT must be our ultimate goal.

While the likes of Syria, Iran and North Korea seem unlikely to join the Treaty in the foreseeable future, the vote in UNGA demonstrates the high level of political support behind the Treaty and gives good reason to expect that, with the necessary assistance, a majority of States should be both willing to sign and able to ratify it within a few years.

In the UK, we expect the Treaty will not require new primary legislation and only minor amendments to our regulations. We therefore aim to sign the Treaty when it opens for signature and to ratify it as soon as possible. We hope this will similarly be the case for those other governments which already have well-established export control systems, where the ATT will not impose significant - or in most cases any - new legal or regulatory burdens.

But we also recognise that before many governments are able to ratify the Treaty, they may need to introduce or raise the standards of their national systems to regulate international weapons transfers to at least the minimum laid down by the Treaty – though we will encourage them to go further.

We are proud of our rigorous national and EU standards and will be offering support and advice to others on how to put similar measures in place. We will coordinate our efforts with other donors to ensure that this is done in a coherent manner. We will also work with industry and others to ensure that where the UK is a world leader in the field of export control, that best practice becomes the accepted norm under the ATT.

Our immediate focus needs to be on identifying priorities for action, in order to deliver early ratification, entry into force and the implementation of the Treaty. Where should assistance be targeted –in terms of which countries, on what issues (e.g. export controls, brokering, transit and transshipment) and in what form (e.g. help with drafting legislation and regulations, establishing effective border controls). We need to explore what needs to be done to ensure the ATT achieves its object and purpose, and makes a genuine difference on the ground.

We must recognise that these changes will take time. But we will encourage states to make this a priority. The world has already waited too long for this process and we should not lose the momentum gained.