

17 European Countries Ratify ATT

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Eighteen countries announced their ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty in early April, bringing the global pact to regulate the transfer of small and conventional arms closer to entry into force. To date, 118 countries have signed the accord, and 31 have ratified it. Fifty states need to ratify the treaty for it to become international law.

All but one of the countries that presented proof of ratification on April 2 are in Europe: Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The only non-European country to ratify the treaty was El Salvador, which has experienced an influx of unregulated weapons and high levels of gun violence.

Although Africa suffers from some of the deadliest conflicts fueled by small arms, only two African countries—Mali and Nigeria—have ratified the treaty so far.

April 2 marked the one-year anniversary of the date the treaty was opened for signature.

“By globally regulating the international trade in arms, nations demonstrate their common responsibility to save lives, reduce human suffering and make the world a safer place for all,” the 17 European states said in a joint statement.

“With our joint deposit, we send a strong signal that we—countries that fought for the Treaty—will spare no efforts to achieve the Treaty’s early entry into force. We are confident that entry into force towards the end of this year 2014 is well within reach,” the statement said.

The United States, which signed the treaty last September, endorsed that goal in a joint statement with the European Union after the EU-U.S. summit on March 26. The Obama administration has yet to set a date for submitting the treaty to the Senate for ratification.

The next country to ratify the treaty could be Japan, where the House of Representatives unanimously approved a bill on April 10 to ratify the pact. The Japanese constitution guarantees its passage during the current session of the Diet, which runs through late June.

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