

## Countries Meet on Arms Trade Treaty

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Representatives of more than 80 states-parties and signatories to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) gathered in Trinidad and Tobago last month to discuss the location of the treaty's future secretariat and reporting requirements for the global effort to regulate the arms trade.

At the Feb. 23-24 meeting in Port-of-Spain, the capital of the island state, more than 40 delegations spoke during the discussion of the secretariat's location, according to social media reports from the conference. Three countries—Austria, Switzerland, and Trinidad and Tobago—are vying to become permanent home to the secretariat. Among the issues discussed were the size and cost of the secretariat and the need for “geographical balance.” No decision on the location was made.

Attendees also reported on presentations on how treaty participants can develop common reporting procedures on arms transfers. The Baseline Assessment Project, launched in 2013 by the Stimson Center in Washington, studied 44 countries and found a wide range of reporting requirements on arms transfers. The meeting closed with a discussion of reporting templates and the schedule of submissions. All parties to the treaty are required to submit an initial report on their national implementation efforts by Dec. 24.

Opponents of the treaty also attended the meeting as a result of the intervention of the U.S. State Department. Tom Mason, a Washington representative of the Rome-based World Forum on Shooting Activities, said department officials asked the conference organizers to drop a provision requiring attendees to support the “object and purpose of the treaty.” Eight members of gun-user and gun manufacturing organizations attended, according to the list of conference participants.

Treaty opponents have found themselves isolated in international forums. The only governments that voted against the ATT in the UN General Assembly in April 2013 were Iran, North Korea, and Syria. Twenty-three countries abstained.

The preparatory conference in Port-of-Spain was the first of three planned meetings before the first conference of states-parties, which is scheduled to be held in Mexico City in September. The next preparatory meeting for that conference is scheduled to take place April 20-21 in Vienna.

The ATT, signed by 130 countries and ratified by 62, entered into force on Dec. 24, 2014. The United States has signed, but not ratified it.

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