

The Issue of Illicit Arms Trade

For several decades, the weapons trade has been among the most lucrative businesses in the world with predictable increases year after year. The ready availability of weapons and ammunition leads to human suffering, political repression, crime and terror among civilian populations. Irresponsible arms transfers can destabilize an entire region, enable violations of arms embargoes and contribute to human rights abuses. Investment is discouraged, and development disrupted in countries experiencing conflict and high levels of violence. Countries affected by conflict or pervasive crime have the most difficulty attaining internationally agreed development goals.

It is very important that we consider peacekeeping in this context. Although small arms and light weapons have important and legitimate uses, they are also subject to diversion and misuse, which every year costs hundreds of thousands of lives. Illicit small arms undermine security and in doing so, undermine sustainable development, fuelling conflict, crime and terrorism. Many UN processes contribute to countering the illicit trade in small arms.

Points to consider:

- Your country's scope: All important weapons systems: battle tanks, armed personnel carriers, artillery, fighter jets, attack helicopters, warships, missiles, and small arms and light weapons.
- Your country's ammunition: as well as parts and components are covered.
- Your country's prohibitions on transfers: Any transfer that could violate Security Council arms embargoes or be used to commit acts of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.
- Your country's criteria for assessment of exports: States will deny an export if there is an "overriding risk" that weapons may be used to negatively impact peace and security, undermine international humanitarian/human rights law, facilitate terrorism, organized crime, and gender-based violence.
- Your country's commitment to regulate: Countries commit to develop an export and import control system. Furthermore, they are also encouraged to regulate transit of weapons through their territories and arms brokers.
- Your country's commitment to report: Transparency is paramount. States commit to report on their present regulatory system, and their actual imports and exports of weapons.
- Your country's international cooperation/assistance: The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) includes provisions on institutional capacity-building and establishes a voluntary trust fund to help States implement the treaty.

Useful links

- <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/att/>
- <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/crime-areas/illicit-firearms-trafficking>
- <http://www.warpp.info/en/m5/articles/illegal-arms-trade>