

Federica Mogherini

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy,
Vice President of the European Commission

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

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Dear High Representative,

ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE ARMS TRADE TREATY (ATT)

Following 20 years of campaigning and advocacy, and seven years of formal discussions, on 24 December 2014 the global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will finally enter into force. This is a historic moment, and a testament to the hard work, determination and cooperation shown by many committed people in civil society, in national governments across the world, at the United Nations (UN), and in regional organisations such as the European Union (EU).

The poorly regulated global trade in weapons and munitions is resulting in at least half a million people dying every year, millions more being injured and forced to flee from their homes. There is also a deeply concerning risk of these weapons and munitions being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence. For the first time, we will have an international treaty in force that can block the flow of arms to governments that would use them to commit atrocities. The ATT has the real potential to prevent serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly if Articles 6 and 7 are implemented in good faith and in line with the object and purpose of the treaty.

The EU and its member states have been amongst the strongest supporters of the ATT, and have demonstrated understanding of the need to foster a strong partnership with civil society to achieve a common goal. We would like to acknowledge in particular the work done by members of the Council working group on Conventional Arms (COARM) and its chairs, and those officials and member states representatives that travelled to New York for discussions in the UN General Assembly first committee, preparatory committees, final treaty conferences, and the ongoing informal consultations on the first Conference of States Parties (CSP). A pivotal role was also played by the human rights directorate of the External Action Service (EEAS) and the Council working group on Human Rights (COHOM), who took the important step of including the ATT in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights, thereby clearly recognising the human rights objective in achieving a strong ATT with robust rules to protect lives.

The coming into force of the treaty is a time for celebration, but it is of course not the end of the journey; the work now begins to ensure that the treaty becomes truly universal and implemented strictly and effectively. The EU and its member states have a key role in this regard, in particular through:

- Using all aspects of bilateral relations to press third countries to accede to the ATT, and to strictly apply its provisions

- Demonstrating the highest possible standards in applying the human rights provisions of both the ATT and the EU Common Position on Arms exports, and in holding each other to account
- Ensuring that there are regular discussions in Council to analyse the human rights implications of arms transfers in specific country situations
- Offering financial and technical assistance to third countries to enable them to accede to the ATT and effectively implement its provisions

Amnesty International, along with our civil society partners, will continue to document and expose irresponsible arms transfers that are used to commit or facilitate serious human rights violations, and hold governments to account.

Yours sincerely,



Ivana McGowan
Director of Programmes
Acting Director