



ICRC



## Information bulletin with ECOWAS and its Member States on Arms Trade Treaty developments

### Upcoming event:

The first and second Arms Trade Treaty Preparatory Committee sessions will be held at UN headquarters in New York City from **July 12 to 23, 2010**.

### Background:

Since 2006, UN Member States have expressed their **views on the feasibility, scope, and draft parameters** of an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) through written submissions to the UN Secretary-General, a Group of 28 Governmental Experts, and an Open-Ended Working Group.

Throughout 2009 and early 2010, the European Union and UNIDIR together held six **regional seminars** on an ATT. These regional meetings aimed at integrating national and regional contributions into the ATT process and helping to identify the scope and implications of such a treaty. The first of these seminars was held for **Central, Northern and West African countries** in April 2009 in Dakar, where participants shared the following ideas and recommendations: an ATT should be based on globally accepted parameters; an ATT should be comprehensive in the scope of weapons and transactions covered; and an ATT should prevent uncontrolled and destabilizing transfers of small arms and light weapons and improve human security in Africa.

In January 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 64/48 convening the **UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty** to sit for four consecutive weeks in 2012 to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms.

In the same resolution, the General Assembly also called for four **Preparatory Committee** sessions throughout 2010 and 2011. The Preparatory Committee will make recommendations to the UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty on the elements "needed to attain an effective and balanced legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms" and will present a report on those elements to the General Assembly at its 66th session.

The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** supports the elaboration of a comprehensive, legally binding ATT that establishes common international standards for the responsible transfer and brokering of all conventional weapons and their ammunition. An ATT should include, among other obligations, a duty to deny a transfer arms or ammunition if there is a clear risk that the arms or ammunition will be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law. (See <http://icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/weapons-statement-011009>)

The ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which has entered into force, contains many of the essential principles and parameters that must guide arms transfer decisions. **ECOWAS Member States** are therefore well placed to make valuable contributions on the elements needed to set high arms transfer standards under an ATT. ECOWAS Member States are encouraged to participate actively in the Preparatory Committee sessions in 2010 and 2011.

## 1. UN background documents

- UN **General Assembly resolutions** on an Arms Trade Treaty: <http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ArmsTradeTreaty/html/ATT-GAResolutions.shtml>
- In 2008, the UN General Assembly established an open-ended working group (OEWG) to consider elements "where consensus could be developed" for their inclusion in an Arms Trade Treaty. The **report of the 2009 Open-Ended Working Group** can be found here (see last heading on Second Session of Open-ended Working Group): <http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ArmsTradeTreaty/html/ATT-OEWG-Documents.shtml>
- In 2008, a group of governmental experts from 28 countries submitted a report on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters of an Arms Trade Treaty. The **report of the group of governmental experts**, which recommended further consideration of efforts to address the international trade in conventional arms, can be found here (see bottom left of the page): <http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ArmsTradeTreaty/html/ATT.shtml>
- In 2006, the UN General Assembly requested that Member States submit their views on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for an Arms Trade Treaty. In 2007, the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) published an **analysis of States' views**, which can be found here: <http://www.unidir.org/pdf/activites/pdf2-act349.pdf>

## 2. Regional initiatives on an Arms Trade Treaty

In 2008, the European Union adopted a joint action through which 6 regional seminars on an Arms Trade Treaty were to be organized in 2009 and 2010. **Reports on the regional seminars**, including one for Central, Northern and West African countries, can be found here: [http://www.unidir.org/bdd/fiche-activite.php?ref\\_activite=431](http://www.unidir.org/bdd/fiche-activite.php?ref_activite=431)

## 3. Other Relevant Documents

- Saferworld publication on **myths and misperceptions** on an Arms Trade Treaty: [http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/401/the\\_arms\\_trade\\_treaty\\_countering\\_myths\\_and\\_misperceptions](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/401/the_arms_trade_treaty_countering_myths_and_misperceptions)
- ICRC guide on **international humanitarian law** criteria in arms transfer decisions: <http://icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/p0916>
- Amnesty International guide on **international human rights** criteria in arms transfer decisions: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ACT30/008/2008/en>
- Saferworld publication on **scope of weapons** in an Arms Trade Treaty: [http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/399/the\\_arms\\_trade\\_treaty\\_and\\_military\\_equipment](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/publications.php/399/the_arms_trade_treaty_and_military_equipment)