

**Opening Statement of Control Arms - Mr. Fadi Abi Allam
10th Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty**

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honored to speak today on behalf of the Control Arms Coalition. I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude - both personally and on behalf of Control Arms - to Ambassador Rusu and the Romanian delegation for their leadership in advancing the work under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) this year, and in preparation for this conference.

I regret that I cannot attend the tenth ATT Conference of States Parties in person. I had planned to travel from Beirut to Geneva, but my flight was canceled due to what the airline described as the "risk of war". And indeed, the atmosphere here is tense, with the threat of missile strikes and bombings looming large. Yet, I felt it is crucial to share this message with the Conference, to underscore the grave consequences of supplying arms to a region already fraught with tension. A region where the risk of a broader conflict has always been present.

In moments like these, the importance of this Treaty cannot be overstated. 21 years ago, Control Arms launched its campaign for the ATT, urging States to adopt the highest possible common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms, precisely to prevent situations like the one that is currently facing the people of the Middle East .

The Treaty is not just a set of rules - it is a response to the vast human suffering caused by poorly regulated arms transfers. Suffering that can be seen today in contexts such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo where war has been ongoing for three decades, in Ethiopia where over 100,000 people were killed in two years, in Gaza where the civilian population has no escape from the devastating cruelty that is being inflicted upon them, in Myanmar where young people are sacrificing their lives in pursuit of the democracy that has been stolen from them, and Sudan where civilians are threatened with yet another genocide.

Since the ATT entered into force ten years ago, Control Arms and its members have continued to support States in joining and implementing the ATT. During this time, we kept our faith in the Treaty's object and purpose. The question I have to ask you today is: have States Parties done the same?

Ten years is a pivotal moment in the life of any international treaty. As such, it is a time to reflect on achievements, while also confronting shortcomings in regards to implementation, application and compliance.

There have certainly been successes during this time. The persistent efforts to bring new States into the ATT fold are commendable. Through national and regional workshops, direct dialogue with States outside the Treaty, and pooling of resources between States Parties and civil society alike, we have made progress towards ATT universalization. The recent accessions of the

Gambia and Malawi are testament to these efforts. Particularly significant is that, with the Gambia's accession in June 2024, all members of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) are now members to the Treaty. Such progress is to be celebrated.

There have also been successes in terms of implementation. Valuable guidance - from ATT model legislation to national reporting templates to the Voluntary Basic Guide to Establishing a National Control System - has been developed due to the diligent work of this community. The progress made in deepening our understanding of Article 7(4) and of the ways in which it can play a role in preventing gender based violence also warrants a special mention. Latvia's Presidency of the 5th ATT Conference of States Parties brought much needed focus on these provisions and continues to stand out as a success in terms of operationalising the Treaty's provisions. Perhaps most significantly, over the past 5 years, we built a community that is engaged and taking action towards the implementation of the gender based violence provisions.

However, at this time, we should ask ourselves: has the time and effort invested in these tools translated into tangible action by States? Have they led to more effective work on the implementation of the ATT? In other words, what is the real impact of our collective efforts? The answer to these questions can only come through an honest and rigorous review of what has worked, and what has not.

We gather here in a year where the issue of arms transfers fueling conflicts and violating international humanitarian and human rights law has drawn unprecedented global attention. In some instances, these transfers risk contributing to genocide and war crimes. Such has been the attention to arms transfers that this year in Lebanon we participated in the "International Day of Action on Arms Transfers to Israel" marking the first time a global day of action has specifically targeted arms transfers to a single country.

Despite widespread condemnation of arms transfers to the warring parties in Yemen and the support provided to Myanmar's military regime, it is only this year - 10 years since the Treaty became international law - that we have finally seen a formal discussion on ATT compliance. This discussion, which took place at the February Working Group meetings, centered on upholding legal obligations under the ATT and the case of the Palestinian people. It marked a significant, but overdue step in addressing the critical need for accountability.

The prohibitions outlined in Article 6, alongside the risk assessment framework in Article 7, provide a clear and robust mechanism for preventing the gravest forms of human suffering caused by irresponsible and illicit arms transfers. Upholding these provisions, and providing the space to discuss their application in relation to actual arms transfers, is essential if the ATT is to fulfill its promise: to reduce human suffering.

I recognize that addressing violations of international law in a multilateral forum, such as this, is never easy. But at the very least there must be open and regular discussions, with input from a diversity of voices. ATT States Parties cannot shy away from the challenges of compliance. To do so not only calls into question the credibility of this forum, but also the integrity of the Treaty.

Today, my country, Lebanon, stands on the precipice of conflict. A conflict that has the potential to become a full blown regional war. Despite the gravity and danger of this situation, ATT States Parties and Signatory States continue to transfer weapons to the Middle East region. At the same time, some of these States are also calling for a lowering of tensions. This undermines genuine efforts to de-escalate the tensions and engage in peace negotiations. It also undermines Article 7, which requires ATT States Parties to assess, before transferring weapons, the risk that the transferred arms could undermine peace and security. If Article 7 is to have meaning, it must be applied “in an objective and non-discriminatory manner” to all transfers, including those to an allied state.

The 10th year since the ATT entered into force should not only be a moment of reflection, but a turning point. I call upon all States Parties to ensure compliance with the ATT, particularly Articles 6 and 7, to ensure that the Treaty’s provisions are not just words on paper, but active safeguards that protect human lives. Let us not wait another decade to see meaningful change. The time for action is now.