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Control Arms: Governments must deliver on promise of life-saving Arms Trade Treaty

Oxfam International, Amnesty International, Saferworld and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

Geneva: As the United Kingdom launches its blueprint for an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the Control Arms campaign today calls on all governments to ensure their proposals for the Treaty recommend a ban on arms transfers that fuel serious human rights abuses, conflict and poverty.

Campaigners warn that otherwise the historic vote in the UN General Assembly in December 2006 to start work on a global Arms Trade Treaty could be rendered meaningless. The UN Secretary General is currently consulting all governments on the feasibility, scope and parameters of the Treaty.

Today, the governments of Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom are co-hosting a meeting at the United Nations in Geneva, calling on all governments to take part in the UN process to build the Treaty. Campaigners are launching their vision for the Treaty at the same event.

“Amnesty International’s research over the past decade has consistently shown how irresponsible arms transfers fuel grave human rights abuses around the world. If governments are serious about preventing such abuses, there has to be a global Arms Trade Treaty with strong human rights safeguards,” said Helen Hughes, Control Arms researcher for Amnesty International.

The UK government’s proposal calls for a legally-binding ATT, which covers all conventional weapons and explicitly bans transfers that fuel serious human rights abuses, provoke conflict, undermine development, and fuel violent crime and terrorism. It covers all arms transfers between governments, and by individual brokers. However, campaigners are concerned that the proposal does not call for the provision of adequate resources to support implementation of the Treaty by poor countries. Without the means to implement it, the agreement could have little impact on the arms trade.

“This Treaty is potentially the most significant advance in international conventional arms controls in 20 years, offering hope to millions of people suffering in the world’s conflict zones. But unless the 153 governments who voted for the Treaty last December follow through with tough proposals, it will not save a single life. The sceptics must not be allowed to water it down,” said Anna Macdonald, Oxfam’s Control

Arms Campaign Manager.

Only the United States voted against the resolution to start work on the Treaty in December 2006. Despite having comparatively strict national laws to control its arms exports, the United States is reluctant to back a new international agreement.

“Today, two of the United States’ key allies, the UK and Australia, have stood up and demanded a tough Arms Trade Treaty to stop irresponsible arms transfers that are causing suffering around the world. This is an important step towards ending the scandal of the unregulated arms trade, and we hope the US will follow,” said Roy Isbister, Team Leader for Arms Transfer Controls, Saferworld, on behalf of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

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Notes to Editors

The campaigners’ position paper, *Assessing the Feasibility, Scope and Parameters of an Arms Trade Treaty: An NGO Perspective*, is a joint publication by the Arms Trade Treaty Steering Committee, whose members include Africa Peace Forum, Amnesty International, Arias Foundation, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Instituto Sou da Paz, International Action Network on Small Arms, Nonviolence International, Oxfam International, Project Ploughshares, Saferworld, Schweitzer Institute, Caritas Internationalis, Viva Rio, Women’s Institute for Alternative Development.

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