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## **Hopes raised for strong Arms Trade Treaty**

The prospect of reaching a historic global deal to end the devastation caused by the irresponsible and poorly regulated arms trade moved a step closer on Thursday, Amnesty International said.

A final draft of an Arms Trade Treaty [ATT] text was published at the UN in New York that addressed a number of potentially serious flaws contained in a previous text.

The White House and other major powers, including the United Kingdom and France are understood to have been closely involved in making the changes.

The month-long negotiations are due to conclude on Friday, in what is expected to be an intense final day of talks.

“This is a positive step forward in achieving an ATT that, with genuine political will, can protect human rights,” said Brian Wood, Arms Control Manager at Amnesty International.

“Several major loopholes that would have severely undermined the effectiveness of the treaty have been addressed, but a few serious concerns remain. We are calling on governments that have stated they want a robust treaty to do all they can on the last day to ensure the strongest possible deal is reached.”

If an agreement is reached, for the first time in history, governments would be required under the treaty to make decisions on arms transfers according to high common standards.

International human rights and humanitarian law remain central to the draft text, demonstrating the consistent commitment by a large number of governments to ensure that this remains in any final agreement.

A floor not a ceiling is now proposed for the types of weapons, munitions and equipment to be covered by the treaty. Ammunition, as well as parts and components for arms, would also be subject to a much tighter decision-making process before an international transfer can take place.

Essential elements that were previously omitted but have now been addressed include the need to have measures that would criminalize any breaches of the treaty.

States would now also be required to take appropriate measures to prevent diversion of weapons for unauthorized end use so they don't end up in the hands of those that are not suppose to have them.

A major remaining concern is that, principally on the insistence of China, the treaty would only apply to the international trade of conventional arms and not necessarily to all international transfers including gifts and aid.

India is also insisting on a clause whereby states may be able to evade the treaty by designating

arms transfers as taking place as part of 'defence cooperation agreements'.

It is expected that sceptical governments like Syria, Iran, North Korea and Cuba, or even Russia and China, might try to attack the strong draft rules if the majority of States in the negotiations that support a strong treaty don't stand firm on the final day.

The negotiations are the culmination of six years of UN consultations and over a decade of campaigning by Nobel Peace Laureates, including Amnesty International, and increasing numbers of non-governmental organizations.