

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: IOR 41/018/2006 (Public)
News Service No: 278
26 October 2006

Overwhelming majority of world's governments vote to start work on an International Arms Trade Treaty

Control Arms Campaign: Amnesty International, International Action Network on Small Arms
(IANSA) and Oxfam International.

Today at the United Nations, the majority of the world's governments took the first step towards a global Arms Trade Treaty to prevent international arms transfers that fuel conflict, poverty and serious human rights violations. The vote comes three years after the launch of a campaign which has seen over a million people in 170 countries calling for a Treaty.

The vote in the UN General Assembly's First Committee is the first time that governments have voted on the proposal to develop an Arms Trade Treaty, and support was overwhelming: 139 voted yes, with only the United States voting against. Support was particularly strong in Africa, Latin America and Europe.

Work on the Treaty will begin in early 2007 when the new UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, will begin to canvass the views of all member states to establish the foundations of the Treaty.

Going into the vote, the resolution was co-sponsored by 116 governments; a huge number for such a bold initiative. 15 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates supported the call for an Arms Trade Treaty this week in a statement issued by the Arias Foundation and the Control Arms Campaign.

"This massive vote to develop a global Arms Trade Treaty is an historic opportunity for governments to tackle the scourge of irresponsible and immoral arms transfers. Any credible Treaty must outlaw those transfers, which fuel the systematic murder, rape, torture and expulsion of thousands of people," said Kate Gilmore, Amnesty International's Executive Deputy Secretary General.

"Today, the world's governments have voted to end the scandal of the unregulated arms trade. Since the Control Arms campaign began three years ago, an estimated one million people have been killed by conventional weapons. In response, over a million campaigners from over 170 countries have called for an Arms Trade Treaty. Today governments answered that call," said Jeremy Hobbs, Director of Oxfam International.

"We have come a long, long way since three years ago when we launched the Control Arms campaign: in those days the prospect of an Arms Trade Treaty being negotiated in the UN was viewed as idealistic at best. But today we are in the majority. Now this victory must be converted into a strong and effective Arms Trade Treaty based on States' commitments under international law," said Rebecca Peters, Director of

IANSA.

Notes to Editors

The Process

The resolution requests the Secretary General to seek the views of all UN Member States on the feasibility, scope and draft parameters on a comprehensive legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the export, import and transfer of conventional arms, and to submit a report to the General Assembly in late 2007. This will be followed by the establishment by the Secretary General in 2008 of a group of governmental experts from around the world which will examine the issue in detail and report back to the UN General Assembly.

About the campaign

The idea for the establishment of globally binding rules on arms transfers began in 1995 with a few Nobel Peace Laureates including Amnesty International and Dr Oscar Arias. The Control Arms Campaign was launched by AI, Oxfam International and the IANSA in 2003 and so far enjoys the support of over a million campaigners worldwide.

For more information, please contact:

Nicola East, Amnesty International in New York on +1 646 334 4286 neast@amnesty.org

Clare Rudebeck, Oxfam International in New York on: +1 646 388 2886 crudebeck@oxfam.org.uk

Kate Noble, IANSA in London on: +44 (0)20 7065 0875 or +44 (0) 7900242869 Kate.Noble@iansa.org

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>