The Arms Trade Treaty
Control Arms

Background
On 2 April 2013, after more than a decade of campaigning and seven years of work at the United Nations, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). This first international Treaty aimed at reducing humanitarian suffering by bringing the arms trade under control sets an important basis for concrete action. It creates a new global norm against which states’ practice will be measured, by other states and by international civil society.

Current context
The ATT officially opened for signature on 3 June 2013. At the time of writing, over 80 countries have signed the Treaty and four have ratified it. 50 ratifications are required to trigger entry-into-force (EIF), which will take place 90 days after the 50th country deposits its instrument of ratification. This could happen by the end of 2014. There could easily be over 100 signatories by the end of 2013, hopefully following a successful high-level treaty event that will take place on 25 September.

The coming months represent a critical next stage in the implementation of the Treaty, as signatories must now work to incorporate its provisions into their national laws and practices. Government departments will have to harmonize their work and coordinate with their legislative branches. Civil society must maintain pressure and momentum in order to universalize the Treaty, while also developing effective monitoring mechanisms that will improve transparency and hold states parties to account.

Achieving the intended goals of the ATT will require all stakeholders—including states, international civil society, and relevant defence industry members—to continue to work together so that the Treaty is effectively implemented and begins to transform the international arms trade.

Recommendations for governments
During First Committee and beyond, governments should:
• Encourage signature and swift and effective entry-into-force of the ATT. States should sign the Treaty if they have not yet done so.
• Take steps toward implementing the Treaty at the highest possible standards and in a transparent manner. In order for the Treaty to have the most impact on the ground, states parties should set the highest possible standards as they implement the treaty.
• Outline their intention to undertake strong implementation of the ATT’s provisions as well as provide updates and examples of such steps already being taken. A joint statement presented by Mexico, and supported by 98 member states on 2 April 2013, explained how the Treaty requires that all conventional arms transfers be evaluated against strong humanitarian and human rights criteria. Many more member states took the opportunity at the signing ceremony in June 2013 to make strong statements. First Committee is another opportunity to indicate progress in this area.

• Participate in and contribute to the substantive discussions taking place in side events and elsewhere in order to share expertise and strengthen capacity for the robust implementation of the ATT.