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**WORKING GROUP ON TREATY UNIVERSALIZATION
CO-CHAIRS' REPORT TO CSP12**

INTRODUCTION

1. This report to the Twelfth Conference of States Parties (CSP12) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is presented by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group on Treaty Universalization (WGTU), Ms. Tsholofelo TSHEOLE of South Africa and Ambassador Carlos FORADORI of Argentina. It is intended to reflect the work undertaken by the WGTU and ATT stakeholders in promoting Treaty universalization since CSP11, as reported during the 18 March 2026 WGTU meeting. The report also includes an overview of the discussions and outcomes of this WGTU meeting [*and the briefing by the WGTU Co-Chairs during the during the 27-28 May 2026 CSP12 Informal Preparatory Meeting*]. The reports concludes with the recommendations which the WGTU puts forward for consideration by CSP12 on this topic.

BACKGROUND

2. The WGTU was established by the CSP3 with the objective of leading the process of harmonizing thoughts and ideas on the issue of Treaty universalization with a view to determining the best approaches for taking the issue forward. The work of the WGTU is guided by its Terms of Reference as well as the Working Group's initial Work Plan endorsed by CSP3 ([ATT/CSP3.WGTU/2017/CHAIR/160/Conf.Rep](#)).

3. Following discussions on enhancing the work of the WGTU, as well as a review of the ATT programme of work and a shift in focus of the Working Groups from theoretical discussions to practical Treaty implementation issues, the CSP10 took a number of decisions that affected the work of the WGTU. The CSP10 firstly welcomed the "WGTU workplan for ATT universalization efforts" which intends to guide the Treaty universalization discussions and outreach efforts of ATT stakeholders during the CSP11 to CSP13 cycles ([ATT/CSP10.WGTU/2024/CHAIR/801/Conf.Rep](#); Annex A). The workplan itself mandates the WGTU to administer the workplan and to monitor and steer its implementation under the recurring agenda item "implementation of the WGTU workplan for ATT universalization efforts". Aligning the work of the WGTU with the mainstream work of the Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation, the CSP10 also mandated the WGTU to conduct structured discussions on national ratification/accession and domestication practices and welcomed a list of practical questions for that purpose ([ATT/CSP10.WGTU/2024/CHAIR/801/Conf.Rep](#); Annex B). This was to be addressed under a recurring WGTU agenda item "ratification/accession and national domestication practices" for at

least the CSP11the CSP11, CSP12 and CSP13 cycles.

18 MARCH 2026 WGTU MEETING

4. The WGTU held its only meeting of the CSP12 preparatory process on 18 March 2026. A letter of the WGTU Co-Chairs and a draft annotated agenda for the meeting were circulated on 17 February 2026 ([ATT/CSP12.WGTU/2026/CHAIR/837/DrAnnAgenda](#)). To facilitate preparation for the meeting, the letter of the Co-Chairs provided several concrete questions for delegations to consider and the draft annotated agenda contained an annex with the practical ratification/accession and domestication questions mentioned above.

Opening of the meeting

5. The Co-Chairs opened the meeting by welcoming Ecuador as the most recent State to join the ATT. Its accession reflects a commitment to responsibility, transparency, and common standards in the global arms trade and strengthens both the ATT community and regional adherence in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this context, the Co-Chairs emphasized the importance of sustained, tailored and constructive dialogue-based engagement that respects national contexts.

6. Ecuador, welcoming the recognition by the Co-Chairs and other States Parties, highlighted the Treaty's role and core obligations and emphasized the necessity of further universalization to strengthen its legitimacy and effectiveness. It emphasized on the human rights dimension of arms control, recalling its engagement with Peru in the UN Human Rights Council on discussing the [impact of arms transfers on human rights](#). Ecuador expressed its intention to contribute to advancing effective implementation through the exchange of best practices, capacity-building and international cooperation.

ATT Secretariat update on the status of ratifications and accessions

7. The [ATT Secretariat](#) briefed delegates on the Treaty's status of participation.¹ Since CSP11, two additional States, Vanuatu and Ecuador, have become ATT States Parties, bringing the total to 118. Twenty-five signatory States have yet to ratify. Regionally, participation remains lowest in Asia and Oceania: in Asia only 23% of all States are ATT States Parties (with an additional 21% signatory States) and in Oceania only 47% of all States are ATT States Parties (with 13% signatory States). This situation underpins the WGTU workplan for ATT universalization efforts' regional focus on the Asia-Pacific States that have not yet joined the Treaty.

8. Delegations welcomed the States Parties that recently joined and emphasized the importance of expanding membership, highlighting the Treaty's role in promoting transparency, strengthening institutional capacities and combating illicit arms trafficking and diversion, while noting related challenges. A number of delegations stressed that universalization efforts should be accompanied by tailored assistance, capacity-building, and realistic implementation expectations. Concerns were raised about underrepresentation in regions such as East Africa and the Indo-Pacific,

¹ An up-to-date overview of the status of participation is available on the *Treaty Status* page of the ATT website: <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-status>.

prompting calls for outreach strategies tailored to the regional context. Delegations also advocated for inclusive approaches, including youth engagement and regional cooperation. A number of observer States also expressed their intention to move toward accession.

Update on activities to promote the universalization of the ATT

9. The CSP12 President outlined activities undertaken to advance universalization since assuming office. These included consultations during the First Committee of the UN General Assembly with non-States Parties and signatory States, particularly Asia-Pacific States and those without representation in Geneva, as well as continued engagement with African and Asia-Pacific States. The President also addressed ATT universalization at several events, including the Wilton Park conference on “[Advancing the ATT: The Road to a Strategy](#)”, and a recent roundtable on ATT universalization which the Co-Chairs hosted in cooperation with the ATT Secretariat and supported by the European Union. This roundtable convened non-States Parties, signatory States and stakeholders to exchange experiences, identify challenges, and discuss practical measures to enhance adherence, cooperation, and assistance. Other events included a disarmament briefing for Pacific Island States, organized by the Australian Mission and the Pacific Islands Forum, and a dialogue with East African States during a meeting of Saferworld’s informal ATT Expert Group.

10. The CSP11 President continued his universalization efforts, focusing on parliamentary and youth engagement, including participation in multilateral forums such as the 151st Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly on arms control and non-proliferation and civil society events, including Saferworld’s informal ATT Expert Group. He also conducted consultations on promoting youth participation in the work of the ATT, thanking Panama and the International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative (IHLI) for advancing this agenda.²

11. Following this, several States Parties, regional organizations and civil society organisations reported on universalization efforts since CSP11. These included integrating ATT promotion in bilateral and multilateral dialogues, as well as activities under the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) and the EU ATT Outreach Programme, which regularly involve partnerships with civil society. Delegations note that such activities are instrumental in addressing legislative, technical, and institutional barriers to accession and implementation. Regional cooperation and the use of regional fora for awareness-raising were highlighted. Delegations emphasized the importance of demonstrating the tangible benefits of ATT membership, including peer learning and technical assistance. In this context, several delegations called for a more strategic approach to universalization, linking it more closely to implementation support and focusing not only on increasing membership numbers but also on the quality and sustainability of engagement. In concluding the item, the Co-Chairs noted the interventions of States from the Asia-Pacific region, the primary focus of the WGTU workplan, encouraging continued efforts.

² See Panama’s working paper on “[Strengthening Youth Participation in the ATT](#)” ([ATT/CSP11/2025/PAN/832/Conf.WP](#)), welcomed by CSP11.

Implementation of the WGTU workplan for ATT universalization efforts

12. In light of CSP11's emphasis on the role of regional actors in advancing universalization, several organisations from underrepresented regions were invited to share perspectives on the status of Treaty in their region, as well as related challenges, opportunities and ongoing activities. These were the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) for the Pacific region, the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) for the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa Region, Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights for the MENA region, and the Forum on Disarmament and Development in Sri Lanka for South Asia.

13. PIF started by emphasizing the importance of universalization for the region's security and the value of its regional mechanisms in adapting international norms to the local context, given its geographic vastness and the limited capacities of its States. While most Pacific island States are transit rather than exporting States, domestication efforts are ongoing, including in non-States Parties. Practical support efforts include model legislation, regional workshops and technical assistance in cooperation with several assistance providers. Future priorities include further embedding ATT discussions into regional processes, tailoring capacity-building to small State needs, strengthening coordination and information exchange, engaging political leadership and parliaments, ensuring inclusive participation of civil society and communities, and leveraging digital tools. RECSA highlighted its mandate in the implementation of the [Nairobi Protocol on Small Arms and Light Weapons](#) and its role in advancing universalization and implementation of the ATT among its members, noting an ongoing review to align the Protocol with evolving international standards such as the ATT. With only two of the 15 members being ATT States Parties, awareness-raising remains central. For that purpose, RECSA leverages its statutory meetings and regional workshops to sensitize States and promote adherence to international instruments. This approach has helped address initial hesitations, particularly concerns related to reporting obligations and perceived implications for national security, fostering greater engagement. In this context, RECSA pointed to recent expressions of intent to join the Treaty, indicating positive momentum, which should be sustained through continued dialogue, regional cooperation, and targeted outreach. Maat for Peace focused on its efforts to strengthen coordinated civil society engagement in the underrepresented Arab region to amplify collective impact, including awareness-raising and outreach activities, and shared plans for consultative workshops to enhance such coordination. The Forum on Disarmament and Development highlighted structural and political challenges with regard to the ATT in South Asia, including maritime issues, competing policy priorities, and a general sensitivity of international security discussions. The Forum also called for more engagement with this particular sub-region. It underscored the role of local civil society actors, who are well placed to sustain dialogue with governments, leverage established networks, and engage communities, sharing experiences from Sri Lanka, where civil society has successfully engaged with government institutions on arms related issues, including potential ATT accession. That is why the Forum calls for broader and more diverse civil society participation in ATT-related processes.

14. Following the presentations, one intervention highlighted the critical role of regional actors with regard to awareness-raising, capacity-building, and facilitating dialogue, and stressed the importance of "regional champions" in promoting the Treaty, demonstrating practical implementation benefits and addressing region-specific challenges. The use of existing regional peace and security platforms to foster information exchange was cited as an effective practice.

15. Turning to the effective implementation of the workplan, the Co-Chairs sought delegations' views on two elements: ways to enhance information-sharing on universalization activities between ATT stakeholders and the ATT Secretariat, and initiatives to carry forward the universalization-related encouragements and requests contained in the CSP11 Final Report, drawn from the CSP11 President's working paper on "*Universalization as a Priority*" ([ATT/CSP11/2025/PRES/825/Conf.WP.UNIV](#)) and attached as Annex A to the draft annotated agenda for the meeting. However, no delegation requested the floor on this topic.

Ratification/accession and national domestication practices

16. Under this item, the WGTU continued to its structured discussions on national ratification/accession and domestication practices, as decided by CSP10 (see paragraph 3).

17. The discussion was initiated by Ms. Laurence MARZAL, Senior Programme Officer on Technical Cooperation and Peace and Security at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), who underscored the central role of parliaments and legislators in advancing the universalization and effective implementation of the Treaty. IPU explained that early and sustained engagement with parliamentarians is critical. Too often, legislative actors are involved too late in treaty processes, despite their importance in shaping legitimacy and implementation frameworks. Effective engagement requires framing the ATT not as a technical instrument, but as a tool for enhancing human security, reducing armed violence, and strengthening governance, issues directly relevant to constituents. Parliamentarians can also play a catalytic role in overcoming stalled ratification or accession processes. After ratification or accession, domestication requires parliamentary action through lawmaking, oversight of arms transfers, and allocation of adequate resources to enforcement bodies. The IPU reaffirmed its commitment to supporting parliaments through awareness-raising, dialogue, and capacity-building initiatives.

18. Following this, representatives of the Gambia and the Philippines outlined their national practices based on the list of practical ratification/accession and domestication questions welcomed by CSP10, after which a representative of Angola provided an update on Angola's current ATT status. The Gambia described their multi-stakeholder process for accession, involving broad institutional and civil society participation. A national committee reviewed existing arms control frameworks, identifying gaps and informing reforms. The Gambia adopted a progressive approach, acceding to the treaty prior to full legislative alignment, while committing to subsequent domestication. Ongoing efforts focus on implementing legislation and a national action plan, supported by international assistance. [The Philippines](#) outlined their process, which underscored the importance of importance of legislative scrutiny, interagency coordination, and stakeholder consultations, including engagement with industry and civil society. The Philippines also shared challenges related to legislative timing, legal harmonization, and industry concerns related to, inter alia, perceived compliance burdens and concerns about risk assessment requirements. [Angola](#), a signatory State, underscored the importance of aligning national legislation with Treaty obligations and has an ongoing inter-agency process to enable immediate implementation upon accession. In this regard, a national legal assessment identified gaps, which are being addressed in cooperation with international partners, advancing capacity-building, awareness-raising, and the development of a ratification roadmap.

19. In the exchange that followed, some States Parties used the opportunity to express support for universalization efforts, stressing that these should remain strategic and targeted, particularly by engaging States with significant roles in regional and global arms supply chains. Also the importance of linking ratification processes with capacity-building and regional cooperation initiatives were mentioned.

CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD AFTER 18 MARCH 2026 WGTU MEETING

20. The Co-Chairs firstly welcome the interventions of several non-States Parties States on their current ATT status, outlining ongoing processes and/or expressing their intent to accede to or ratify the Treaty. It is important to acknowledge such expressions and to build on momentum through sustained engagement, dialogue and offers of support. In this regard, the Co-Chairs have included a draft recommendation to that end in this report. The Co-Chairs also remind delegations that the WGTU workplan calls for all ATT stakeholders to “*promote the Voluntary Trust Fund, as Signatory States and other States having shown clear and unambiguous political commitment to accede to the ATT requiring assistance to implement the Treaty may also submit project proposals*”.

21. This also links to calls by several delegations for a more strategic approach to universalization, including closer alignment with implementation support. The discussion highlighted a number of other valuable observations, including the need for outreach strategies tailored to regional contexts, the use of regional fora for awareness-raising, and the importance of inclusive approaches that engage relevant actors identified by local stakeholders.

22. In response to suggestions to further involve potential States Parties in ATT discussions, the Co-Chairs also recall that the WGTU workplan provides for inviting such States to participate in ATT meetings, including to share their situation, challenges and issues, and for instrumentalizing the ATT Sponsorship Programme to that end.

23. The Co-Chairs note that these insights not only provide a basis for valuable recommendations to be considered by CSP12, but should also inform further work on how the Working Group, the broader ATT process and all ATT stakeholders can advance participation in the Treaty. In this regard, the Co-Chairs point out that the WGTU workplan, adopted to guide universalization discussions and outreach efforts during the CSP11 to CSP13 cycles, will expire at the end of the next cycle. While not pre-empting future discussions, the Co-Chairs observe that key operational elements of the plan have not yet been implemented in full. This includes particularly the envisaged role of a group of regional universalization champions, led by the WGTU Co-Chairs and including the ATT vice-Presidents as well as other States Parties willing to act as regional universalization champions. Despite efforts to do so, it has proven difficult to operationalize the tasks assigned to this Group, particularly meeting with regional universalization champions to explore regional dynamics and States’ inclination to join the ATT, strengthen collaboration, and refine regional engagement and targeted outreach strategies. Similarly, structured information exchange on universalization activities between ATT stakeholders and the ATT Secretariat remains a work in progress.

24. Also noting the limited engagement on these topics in the Working Group in recent sessions, the Co-Chairs consider that there is merit in reflecting on the role of the Working Group and

reinvigorating the broader ATT process in this area. The ongoing development of a five-year strategy for the ATT provides a timely opportunity in this regard, with universalization identified as one of the key thematic areas for the strategy. In coordination with the extended ATT Bureau, the Working Group could contribute to this exercise, as a platform for further reflection on relevant elements. At the same time, the Co-Chairs still see relevance in the workplan's approach, which calls for States Parties to assume the role of regional champions and to convene informally to explore non-States Parties' inclination to join the Treaty, identify key barriers and possible solutions, strengthen collaboration and discuss regional engagement and targeted outreach strategies.

WGTU BRIEFING DURING 27-28 MAY 2026 CSP12 INFORMAL PREPARATORY MEETING

25. During the CSP12 Informal Preparatory Meeting, on 27 May 2026, the Co-Chairs presented the draft of this report and its recommendations.

26. In response, delegations expressed support for the draft recommendations. Some delegations highlighted the importance of maintaining dialogue with signatory States and non-States Parties, particularly those that have demonstrated an interest in joining the Treaty or have participated in ATT-related activities. Engagement should continue to focus on communicating the practical benefits of Treaty membership, addressing misconceptions regarding ATT obligations, and demonstrating how implementation can contribute to national and regional security objectives.

27. Throughout the discussion, delegations stressed that universalization efforts should be accompanied by technical assistance, capacity-building, and sustained political engagement, ensuring that States possess the necessary legal, administrative, and institutional capacities to implement the Treaty effectively once they join. In this regard, accession and implementation should be pursued as mutually reinforcing objectives. Delegations underscored the value of existing ATT assistance mechanisms, including the Voluntary Trust Fund and the Sponsorship Programme, as well as the role of regional champions, and recognized that existing mechanisms should be leveraged to maximize impact.

28. Several delegations also emphasized the need to align future universalization efforts with the development of the five-year strategy for the ATT and expressed support for a coherent approach linking outreach, accession, implementation support, and capacity-building initiatives. They indicated that universalization efforts would benefit from clearer long-term planning, measurable objectives, and regular opportunities to review progress and identify challenges and lessons learnt without creating additional reporting burdens.

29. More generally, there was broad convergence that universalization extends beyond increasing membership and entails fostering a shared commitment to effective implementation, transparency and accountability. Delegations also reiterated the importance of targeted outreach efforts and regionally tailored approaches that take into account differing political, legal, security, and institutional contexts, and involve regional peers facing similar circumstances and challenges. Delegations further emphasized the need to enhance information-sharing and coordination among stakeholders involved in universalization to allow for more strategic and collaborative engagement and avoid duplication.

30. As delegations did not propose any changes regarding the draft report and its recommendations, no changes were made.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CSP12

31. Based on the above and considering the work undertaken by the WGTU to fulfil its mandate for the period between CSP11 and CSP12, the Working Group recommends that CSP12:

- a. Welcomes the expressions of intent by several non-States Parties to advance towards ratification of or accession of the Treaty and encourages the CSP President, the ATT Secretariat, and other relevant stakeholders to engage closely with such States to facilitate these processes, as appropriate;*
- b. Encourages all ATT stakeholders to continue promoting the timely ratification of the Treaty by signatory States;*
- c. Emphasizes the link between universalization and technical assistance and reiterates the call to promote the VTF and other relevant technical assistance programmes to States having shown clear and unambiguous political commitment to accede to the ATT;*
- d. Notes the expiry of the WGTU workplan at the end of CSP13 and encourages all ATT stakeholders to reflect on the role of the WGTU, its Terms of Reference and workplan, including through the WGTU, as part of the discussions on a five-year strategy for the ATT;*
- e. Continues to encourage States Parties to assume the role of regional universalization champions and the ATT Secretariat to convene coordination meetings, as appropriate.*
