



**Opening Statement of Control Arms - Ms. Monalisa Hazarika
12th Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty
Monday 24 August 2026**

Ms. President, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

It is an honour to address this Conference on behalf of the Control Arms Coalition. I wish to sincerely thank the President, Ms. Tsholofelo TSHEOLE, for her leadership and commitment to youth engagement in the ATT process, and Canada and Switzerland for their continued generous support of the Control Arms Youth Sponsorship Program, of which I am a part.

Last year, we asked whether States Parties would rise to the challenge of a world witnessing unprecedented levels of armed conflict and civilian suffering. One year later, I want to begin with a different question: **When we talk about the arms trade in this room, who are we talking about?** We talk about exports and imports. Licences and authorizations. Categories, numbers and reporting tables. But behind every transfer is a person. Behind every weapon is a decision. And behind every number is a life worth protecting. That is why the ATT must never become an agreement that exists primarily in Geneva. We must look past the bureaucratic language of the Treaty to focus on its true purpose: reducing human suffering and protecting communities from armed violence.

Communities around the world do not experience the ATT as an article, a report or a working group—they experience it through the consequences of weapons. In Myanmar, the [2026 Report](#) of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded a minimum of 702 civilian fatalities between August 2025 and January 2026, including 224 women and 153 children, accounting for more than 53 per cent of total civilian fatalities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the cost of armed violence is measured not only in casualties but in stolen childhoods. [UNICEF reported that](#), following the January 2025 escalation of violence, grave violations against children tripled in just one month—with killing and maiming rising sevenfold, abductions sixfold, sexual violence more than two-and-a-half times, and attacks on schools and hospitals twelvefold. In Ukraine, 2025 was the deadliest year for civilians since the full-scale invasion. The [UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission](#) verified 2,514 people killed and 12,142 injured, a 31 percent increase from the previous year. In Gaza, we can see what weapons leave behind: not only lives lost, but homes turned to rubble, schools turned into shelters, families repeatedly uprooted, essential services destroyed, and more than 60 million tonnes of debris standing between people and the possibility of rebuilding their lives.

And then there are the stories of bloodshed coming out of Sudan—stories that can tell us more about the human cost of the arms trade than a hundred pages of statistics. [A Human Rights Council Report on the atrocities around El Fasher](#) documented the account of a pregnant woman who was asked by an RSF fighter how many months pregnant she was. She answered: seven months. He fired seven bullets into her abdomen. Seven bullets. Seven months. One life. That story forces us to look upstream.

A weapon does not arrive in a conflict zone without a chain of decisions behind it. So the uncomfortable questions for the ATT community to ask are: **What happened before that trigger was pulled? Who transferred the weapon? What risks were assessed? What safeguards were applied? And what responsibility did those involved have to prevent weapons from being used to commit grave violations of international law?** These are not abstract questions. They are precisely the questions that give meaning to Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty. Because behind every transfer is a decision and behind every decision is a human life that may depend on getting it right.

So, **“how do we humanise the ATT?”** A weapon does not become exempt from arms control simply because it crossed a border legally. Article 7(4) requires States Parties to consider the risk that transferred arms could be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence. But how are these considerations meaningfully applied in due diligence and risk assessments before a transfer is authorized? Do they inform investigations, shape the questions asked of end-users, and ultimately influence transfer decisions? Or has Article 7(4) become simply another box-ticking exercise — something acknowledged on paper, but does not materially affect the outcome? If this provision does not influence how States assess and manage risk, then we must ask ourselves: **what purpose is it serving?**

And this conversation must include youth and early career professionals. Young people are not simply the next generation of the ATT—they are already living with the consequences of today’s arms-transfer decisions. They must therefore be more than an audience and have a place at the table as researchers, advocates, community leaders, parliamentarians and partners in prevention. I want to acknowledge the International Humanitarian Law & Youth Initiative and its Youth4ATT simulation, held earlier this month in the lead-up to CSP12. Bringing young people into these negotiations and creating space for them to develop practical policy recommendations is precisely the kind of meaningful participation the ATT needs.

Distinguished delegates,

The question before this Conference is not simply how many States are parties to the ATT. It is not how many reports we receive. And it is not how many meetings we hold. The deeper question is whether the Treaty is making a difference to people who will never enter this room – the mother in Sudan, the student in Myanmar, the child in the DRC, the family in Gaza, the civilian in Ukraine, the woman threatened with a firearm in her own home, and the young person whose future is narrowed by a community saturated with weapons and violence.

They are the reason this Treaty exists. So let us make the ATT visible where it matters most: in safer homes, safer communities and fewer lives destroyed by irresponsible and illicit arms transfers. Let us measure our success not only by activity, but by impact. Not only by transfers, but by lives protected. Not only by the number of States at this table, but by the number of people who are safer because of the decisions made here. We call on States Parties to make the ATT a Treaty of action: to make their application of Articles 6 and 7 visible, including when



they decide not to authorize transfers, and to lead by example in setting the highest standards for responsible arms transfers.

Let us ensure that the decisions we make in this room are worthy of the lives beyond it.

Thank you.