

IHLI Statement- Agenda Item 4 – General Debate

Thank Ms Chair

The **International Humanitarian Law and Youth Initiative (IHLI)** is concerned about the growing risks associated with the illicit diversion and trafficking of arms through maritime routes, and the direct consequences this can have for civilian protection, coastal communities, and regional peace and security.

These risks should not be viewed as theoretical or distant. In the **Red Sea alone, 61 confirmed maritime security incidents have been documented since January 2024, including 57 incidents during 2024 and 2025.** IHLI has also documented the interception of **more than 800 missile and UAV components** in maritime interdiction operations in the Red Sea during 2024 and 2025.

These developments demonstrate that **maritime security and arms flows can no longer be considered separately.** They also remind us that the risk of diversion does not end at the point of export or with the designated end-user.

We therefore believe that effective implementation of **Articles 9 and 11 of the Arms Trade Treaty** requires consideration of the entire arms supply chain, including transit and trans-shipment.

At the same time, we believe that greater attention is needed to the impact of **developments in weapons technology, including the increasing use of artificial intelligence, on maritime security and on the implementation of the ATT.** Emerging technologies may transform the way weapons are developed, transferred, tracked, and potentially diverted, creating new challenges for existing control and risk-assessment mechanisms.

Diversion risks can exploit gaps between national and regional control systems, including through **ship-to-ship transfers, flag-hopping, the use of shadow fleets, and the concealment or falsification of vessel identities and locations.**

We therefore call on States Parties to strengthen cooperation and information-sharing among **export authorities, customs, port authorities, coast guards, and agencies responsible for trade and transport controls,** and to ensure that export risk assessments consider diversion risks during transit and trans-shipment, and not only risks associated with the final end-user.

We also encourage States Parties to continue substantive discussions on the **maritime dimensions of Articles 9 and 11,** including the implications of emerging technologies and AI, while strengthening cooperation with relevant international organizations, the private sector, academia, civil society, and youth-led organizations.

These efforts should not be limited to States with advanced maritime capabilities. Many States continue to face significant technical and institutional capacity gaps, while coastal communities, fishers, and maritime workers experience the security, humanitarian, economic, and environmental consequences of illicit arms trafficking.

In this context, we would also like to share with States Parties some recommendations emerging from the Youth4ATT 2026 discussions.

The International Humanitarian Law & Youth Initiative (IHLI), in cooperation with the Presidency of the Twelfth Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (CSP12), UNODA, SEHLAC, the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES), and the Kenya Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security (KCYPs), organized the Youth4ATT Simulation.

The initiative brought together 37 young people from six regions, including representatives of youth-led organizations, researchers, academics, and other stakeholders, to discuss practical challenges related to the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Youth4ATT served as an informal space bringing together youth organizations and relevant stakeholders. It was primarily designed as a learning and interactive space, providing young participants with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Treaty and its implementation, while engaging in discussions inspired by the work of the Conference of States Parties.

Over the course of two days of discussions, participants focused, among other issues, on challenges related to diversion and illicit arms trafficking. They emphasized the importance of strengthening information-sharing between exporting, importing, transit and trans-shipment States; improving diversion risk assessments throughout the transportation process; and strengthening the capacities of States facing technical or institutional challenges in this area.

Participants also highlighted the importance of involving affected communities and young people in understanding these risks and in developing practical and context-appropriate responses.

We believe that these recommendations can contribute to the ongoing discussions under Articles 9 and 11 of the Treaty, while bringing a practical perspective from young people and civil society on how to make Treaty implementation more effective and responsive to emerging risks

In this regard, we emphasize the importance of continuing this informal space, bringing together young people, youth-led organizations, research institutions, academics, civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders—not only to exchange views, but also to work together on the practical implementation of the Treaty, share expertise, and develop actionable recommendations.

I thank you

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