

Youth4ATT 2026 Working Paper - Arms Trade Treaty 12th Conference of States Parties: Youth Recommendations for Strengthening the Arms Trade Treaty

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I. Introduction

1. The Youth4ATT 2026 regional consultations brought together 37 young people from diverse regions and contexts to discuss the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the challenges affecting its implementation, and opportunities to strengthen implementation in the years ahead.
2. While the challenges identified varied across regions, the consultations highlighted a number of common issues, including the gap between international commitments and their implementation at the national level; limited institutional and technical capacities in some contexts; challenges in preventing diversion; transparency and reporting; implementation of the Treaty in a gender-responsive manner; and limited participation of youth and civil society in ATT-related processes.
3. The Arms Trade Treaty is the first legally binding multilateral instrument to establish common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms, with the objectives of contributing to international and regional peace, security and stability; reducing human suffering; and preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms and preventing their diversion. Achieving these objectives requires the effective implementation of Treaty obligations at the national, regional, and international levels.
4. More than a decade after the adoption of the Treaty, progress has been made in advancing its universalization, developing national control systems, and strengthening international cooperation. However, practical challenges continue to affect States' ability to implement their obligations, including limited resources and capacities, differences among national systems, challenges in data collection and information-sharing, gaps in preventing diversion, and varying levels of transparency and reporting.
5. The priorities identified by participants differed across regional contexts. In West and Central Africa, discussions focused on diversion and illicit circulation of arms, weak border

controls and coordination, limited institutional capacities, and the need to strengthen regional cooperation and assistance.

6. In the Arab Region and North Africa, participants highlighted the diversion and illicit trafficking of arms to conflict-affected areas and armed groups, limited awareness of the Arms Trade Treaty and its implementation, and the need to strengthen national and regional efforts to prevent diversion, address illicit arms flows, and enhance awareness and meaningful participation.

7. In Latin America and the Caribbean, participants highlighted the diversion of firearms and ammunition to organized criminal groups, limited institutional and technical capacities, insufficient coordination among government agencies, challenges related to tracing and data collection, and the differentiated impacts of firearms-related violence on women and girls.

8. In Europe and North America, discussions focused on Treaty universalization, compliance, accountability, responsible private-sector conduct, and the need to strengthen civil society and youth participation beyond symbolic engagement.

9. In the Asia-Pacific region, participants highlighted the diversity of political and institutional contexts, limited representation within Treaty processes, challenges to regional cooperation, the normalization of arms possession and ease of access through online platforms, and the need to take context-specific approaches to universalization efforts.

10. In East and Southern Africa, discussions focused on national control systems, preventing diversion, transparency and reporting, gender-responsive implementation, international cooperation and assistance, and the need to keep Treaty implementation responsive to technological developments.

11. Based on these consultations, Youth4ATT identified the implementation gap as a common issue across different regions. The findings indicate that legal obligations and national policies need to be accompanied by practical implementation, appropriate institutional and technical capacities, information-sharing, cooperation, and broader participation of relevant stakeholders.

12. The consultations also highlighted the importance of youth participation. Children and young people are directly affected by armed violence, diversion, and irresponsible arms transfers, while also actively contributing to research, advocacy, peacebuilding, and community resilience. Their experiences and perspectives can contribute to identifying implementation challenges and developing responses that are responsive to local and regional needs.

13. Against this background, this Working Paper presents a set of recommendations based on the Youth4ATT 2026 regional consultations, with the aim of supporting discussions on the

implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty and strengthening cooperation and participation in the context of the **Twelfth Conference of States Parties (CSP12)**.

14. The recommendations presented in this Working Paper are grounded in the discussions, priorities, and regional perspectives identified through the six Youth4ATT 2026 regional consultations. While participants highlighted challenges specific to their respective regions, the consultations also identified a number of common implementation gaps and cross-cutting priorities. The recommendations therefore seek to complement and strengthen existing Arms Trade Treaty mechanisms and processes, rather than create parallel structures, while promoting more meaningful, sustained, and inclusive participation in Treaty implementation.

II. Why Bridging the Implementation Gap Matters for the Arms Trade Treaty

14. The existence of national legislation and international commitments does not, on its own, ensure effective arms control systems. Participants across the Youth4ATT regional groups identified the gap between formal commitments and their practical implementation as one of the key challenges to effective Treaty implementation.

15. This gap is particularly evident in preventing diversion. Arms that were initially transferred legally may enter illicit circulation as a result of theft, corruption, unauthorized re-export or retransfer, weak stockpile management, seizure by armed groups, or insufficient end-user controls. Diverted arms may subsequently reach conflict-affected areas, organized criminal groups, or other unauthorized actors.

16. The consultations highlighted that strengthening diversion prevention requires a combination of measures, including pre-transfer risk assessments, end-user verification, stockpile management, marking and record-keeping, tracing, post-delivery verification, and timely information-sharing among relevant national and regional authorities. Participants also emphasized the value of existing ATT mechanisms and processes that facilitate the exchange of information and practical experiences on diversion, and encouraged States Parties to make greater use of these mechanisms to strengthen national and regional responses.

17. Participants also identified transparency and reporting as important elements of Treaty implementation. Improved national data collection, information-sharing, and reporting can help States identify challenges, monitor progress, exchange good practices, and identify areas where additional support is needed. Participants encouraged States Parties to continue strengthening their engagement with the existing ATT transparency and reporting processes, including the Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WGTR), and to make greater use of reporting and related information to inform implementation efforts. Participants further highlighted the value of complementary and

parallel reporting by regional organizations, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders as a means of strengthening transparency, supporting independent analysis, and identifying gaps or inconsistencies in available information. Where relevant, such reporting could draw on publicly available data and existing international reporting mechanisms, including the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), to support cross-referencing, verification, and a more comprehensive understanding of international arms transfers. Youth4ATT therefore encourages greater recognition and use of complementary reporting and independent data sources in discussions on ATT transparency and reporting.

18. At the same time, participants noted that reporting requirements can present challenges for some States, particularly where institutional or technical capacities are limited. Where States already collect similar information through regional mechanisms or other international instruments, opportunities could be explored to streamline reporting processes, reduce duplication, and improve consistency while maintaining the specific requirements of each instrument.
19. Regional cooperation was identified as an area that can contribute to addressing a number of implementation challenges. Regional mechanisms can provide opportunities to exchange information and experience, learn from national practices, strengthen capacities, and address shared challenges, particularly in relation to border controls, diversion prevention, and tracing.
20. The implementation of **Article 7(4)** also received attention during the consultations, particularly regarding the need to consider the risks of arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence. Improved collection of relevant data, access to appropriate expertise, and the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes can contribute to States' ability to identify and assess these risks.
21. Participants also emphasized the importance of international cooperation and assistance in supporting States facing technical, financial, or institutional capacity constraints. Existing Treaty mechanisms, including the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF), provide important opportunities to strengthen national systems and capacities for Treaty implementation. Participants encouraged States Parties and relevant stakeholders to make effective use of these existing mechanisms and to ensure that assistance responds to identified national and regional needs.
22. Universalization remains an important area for strengthening Treaty implementation. Discussions highlighted that the challenges faced by States that have not yet joined the Treaty may differ from one context to another. Outreach and universalization efforts may

therefore be more effective when they take national and regional circumstances and needs into account and connect discussions on accession with practical implementation support. Participants also emphasized the important role of young people in advancing awareness and universalization efforts. They recommended strengthening youth engagement through existing ATT processes and considering the designation of youth and children focal points or contact persons who can support awareness-raising and outreach efforts related to the Treaty. Participants further highlighted the value of initiatives such as Youth4ATT, student and school-based activities, educational programmes, community outreach, and social media campaigns in making the Treaty more accessible and understandable to younger audiences and broader communities. Such initiatives can help build awareness of the objectives and importance of the ATT, encourage informed dialogue on responsible arms transfers, and contribute to longer-term support for the universalization and effective implementation of the Treaty.

23. The consultations also highlighted the importance of meaningful and inclusive participation of civil society, young people, and conflict-affected communities in Treaty processes. Local and youth-led organizations, civil society, academic institutions, and communities directly affected by armed conflict and armed violence can provide valuable field-based information and expertise, contribute to research, awareness-raising, and capacity-building, and support a better understanding of the impacts of arms transfers, diversion, and arms-related violence on different communities. Participants emphasized the importance of systematically including young people and communities living in or affected by armed conflict in consultations and discussions related to arms transfers, diversion, conflict prevention, and Treaty implementation. Their direct experiences and perspectives can help ensure that policies, risk assessments, and implementation measures reflect the realities and needs of affected populations. Meaningful participation should therefore extend beyond consultation with States and institutional stakeholders to include affected communities, particularly young people, women, and other groups disproportionately affected by armed violence.

III. Turning Commitments into Practical Action: Recommendations to States Parties and Other Relevant Stakeholders

24. Based on the findings of the regional consultations, Youth4ATT proposes the following actions that could contribute to strengthening implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty:

A. National Implementation and Institutional Coordination

- **Strengthen national control systems:** Encourage States Parties to continue developing the national legislation, policies, and systems required to implement the Treaty, in accordance with their national contexts and needs.

- **Strengthen inter-agency coordination:** Encourage coordination among relevant national institutions, including ministries of foreign affairs, defence, interior, customs authorities, law enforcement agencies, and judicial authorities, as appropriate.
- **Establish inclusive national focal points:** Encourage States to establish or strengthen national focal points responsible for Treaty implementation, facilitating information-sharing and coordination among relevant institutions, while ensuring the representation and meaningful participation of women, youth, and civil society, thereby promoting an inclusive and gender-responsive approach to Treaty implementation.

B. Preventing Diversion

- **Strengthen diversion risk assessments:** Encourage States Parties to develop or strengthen procedures for assessing the risk of diversion before authorizing arms transfers.
- **Improve end-user controls:** Strengthen end-user verification procedures, including through the use of reliable documentation and appropriate verification mechanisms.
- **Strengthen post-delivery verification:** Encourage States Parties, where appropriate and feasible, to use mechanisms to verify that transferred arms have reached the intended end user and are being used in accordance with the specified conditions.
- **Improve stockpile management:** Support the development of effective systems for managing, recording, securing, and monitoring stockpiles, particularly in contexts facing heightened diversion risks.
- **Strengthen tracing and information-sharing:** Encourage cooperation among national and regional authorities to exchange information concerning diverted, lost, or stolen arms, in accordance with relevant national laws and procedures.

C. Arms Transfers and Conflict-Affected Contexts

- **Strengthen conflict-sensitive arms transfer assessments:** Encourage States Parties to ensure that assessments of proposed arms transfers take into account the dynamics of armed conflicts and the potential consequences of such transfers for civilians, local communities, and regional stability.
- **Prioritize the protection of civilians:** Encourage States Parties to strengthen consideration of the risks that transferred arms may contribute to attacks against civilians, violations of international humanitarian law, or the escalation or prolongation of armed conflicts.
- **Recognize affected communities as stakeholders in Treaty implementation:** Recognize communities directly affected by armed conflict and arms-related violence as relevant

stakeholders whose experiences and knowledge can contribute to understanding the real-world consequences of arms transfers and diversion and to developing more effective prevention and protection measures.

- **Ensure the participation of conflict-affected communities:** Encourage States Parties and relevant ATT stakeholders to include communities living in or directly affected by armed conflict in relevant consultations, risk assessments, research, and discussions on Treaty implementation, ensuring that their experiences and perspectives inform policies and measures related to arms transfers and diversion.
- **Strengthen the participation of women and youth from conflict-affected contexts:** Encourage the meaningful participation of women and young people from conflict-affected communities in relevant ATT consultations and processes, recognizing their experiences and contributions to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, community resilience, and the prevention of arms-related violence.
- **Improve information from conflict-affected contexts:** Encourage the collection and use of reliable, field-based information on arms transfers, diversion, illicit arms flows, and the impacts of arms-related violence in conflict-affected communities, while ensuring appropriate safeguards for the protection and security of affected populations and information providers.
- **Strengthen regional cooperation in conflict-affected regions:** Encourage States and relevant regional organizations to strengthen cooperation to prevent illicit arms flows and diversion into conflict-affected areas, including through information-sharing, tracing, border controls, and coordinated responses.
- **Consider changes in conflict dynamics:** Encourage States Parties, where appropriate, to take into account significant changes in conflict dynamics, security conditions, or patterns of arms-related violence when assessing or reviewing relevant arms transfers and implementing Treaty obligations.

Transparency and Reporting

- **Strengthen national data-collection capacities:** Encourage States Parties to develop their capacity to collect, organize, and analyze data required for Treaty-related reporting.
- **Improve the quality of reporting:** Encourage the exchange of good practices and experiences among States to improve the accuracy, completeness, and consistency of reports.
- **Reduce duplication in reporting:** Explore opportunities to coordinate reporting processes where the same information is required under multiple regional or international mechanisms, while maintaining the specific requirements of each instrument.

- **Promote the use of data in policymaking:** Encourage the use of reporting data and other relevant information to identify implementation gaps and inform capacity-building and assistance programmes.

D. International Cooperation and Assistance

- **Expand technical assistance:** Encourage the provision of technical assistance to States requiring support in developing national legislation, systems, and procedures for Treaty implementation.
- **Strengthen institutional capacity:** Support capacity-building for national institutions responsible for Treaty implementation, including training, skills development, and technical systems.
- **Strengthen the use of the Voluntary Trust Fund:** Encourage the effective use of existing mechanisms to support States in identifying their needs and implementing practical projects to strengthen Treaty implementation.
- **Promote South-South cooperation:** Encourage the exchange of experiences and practices among States facing similar challenges, including through regional and bilateral cooperation.

E. Gender-Responsive Implementation

- **Integrate gender considerations into Treaty implementation:** Encourage States Parties to systematically consider gender perspectives in Treaty implementation and the assessment of risks associated with arms transfers.
- **Strengthen implementation of Article 7(4):** Encourage the exchange of experiences and practices related to assessing the risks of arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence.
- **Improve data:** Encourage the collection and use of relevant data on arms-related violence, including sex-disaggregated data where feasible.
- **Strengthen women's participation:** Encourage the meaningful participation of women in national decision-making processes related to arms control and Treaty implementation.

F. Regional Cooperation and Peer Learning

- **Strengthen regional mechanisms:** Encourage States to use or further develop existing regional mechanisms for exchanging experiences and information related to Treaty implementation.

- **Exchange good practices:** Create regular opportunities for States to discuss practical challenges and exchange solutions and practices that may be applicable across different contexts.
- **Strengthen cooperation on borders and tracing:** Support cooperation among neighbouring States on border controls, information-sharing, and preventing illicit trafficking and diversion of arms.

G. Treaty Universalization

- **Adopt context-sensitive approaches:** Encourage universalization efforts to take into account the specific circumstances, needs, and barriers faced by individual States.
- **Link universalization efforts with practical support:** Encourage the provision of information and technical assistance to States considering accession to the Treaty or working to strengthen their implementation capacities.
- **Strengthen regional dialogue on the Treaty:** Make use of existing regional frameworks to increase awareness of the Treaty and facilitate the exchange of experiences related to accession and implementation.

H. Civil Society and Academic Engagement

- **Provide regular opportunities for participation:** Encourage States Parties and other relevant stakeholders to provide regular opportunities for civil society and academic institutions to contribute to discussions on Treaty implementation.
- **Support independent research:** Support research and studies that contribute to understanding implementation challenges and the impacts of arms transfers and diversion on communities.
- **Utilize local expertise:** Encourage the integration of local knowledge and expertise into the design of awareness-raising, capacity-building, and assistance programmes.

I. Youth Participation

- **Strengthen children and youth participation in Treaty processes:** Encourage States Parties and other relevant stakeholders to increase opportunities for meaningful children and youth participation in preparatory meetings, working groups, consultations, side events, and Conferences of States Parties.
- **Create opportunities for children and youth participation within delegations:** Encourage States to consider including young people in their delegations, including youth with

experience in research, policy, community engagement, peacebuilding, or arms-related issues.

- **Establish youth and children focal points:** Invite States Parties to consider establishing national focal points for youth and children in the context of Treaty implementation, drawing, where appropriate, on existing experiences from other areas.
- **Establish a structured mechanism for children and youth participation:** Invite relevant stakeholders to explore the establishment of children and youth platforms or consultative mechanisms that would provide regular and structured opportunities for young people to contribute to Treaty-related discussions and processes.
- **Connect youth participation with the Youth, Peace and Security agenda:** Encourage States Parties and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen linkages between ATT implementation and the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, and to recognize the contributions of young people to violence prevention, peacebuilding, and community resilience.
- **Integrate youth perspectives into assistance projects:** Encourage entities implementing projects supported through the Voluntary Trust Fund and other ATT-related assistance mechanisms to consider involving young people and youth-led organizations in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects.

J. Technology and Digital Platforms

- **Monitor technological developments:** Encourage States Parties and other relevant stakeholders to continue examining the implications of emerging technologies for arms transfers and diversion.
- **Address risks associated with digital platforms:** Strengthen awareness of risks associated with the use of digital platforms to facilitate illicit access to arms, ammunition, or related information.
- **Promote exchange of expertise:** Encourage States and relevant stakeholders to exchange experiences on tools and practices for addressing emerging technological and digital risks.

K. Awareness-Raising and Communication

- **Make Treaty information more accessible:** Develop awareness-raising materials explaining the objectives and importance of the ATT in clear and accessible language, without relying exclusively on technical or diplomatic terminology.

- **Reach children, young people and local communities:** Encourage awareness initiatives targeting children, young people and communities affected by arms-related violence, taking into account local languages and contexts.
- **Use modern communication tools:** Make use of digital platforms, social media, and innovative educational tools to broaden awareness of the Treaty and strengthen understanding among different audiences.