

ARMS TRADE TREATY

Twelfth Conference of States Parties Geneva, 24 – 28 August 2026

Statement by Austria/General Debate Ambassador Alexander Kmentt Permanent Representative of Austria

Mr President,

Thank you for giving me the floor. We wish you and your team all the best for your chairpersonship and thank the Head of the Secretariat and her team as well as all the facilitators for their excellent work in preparing this meeting.

Austria aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the European Union and its member states throughout this week.

Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

The Arms Trade Treaty remains a key instrument for regulating international trade in conventional arms and for preventing and eradicating their illicit trade. By addressing and discussing challenges in the implementation of the Treaty in an open and inclusive manner, Austria is convinced that the ATT has and will continue to play an important role in contributing to international peace and security as well as in reducing human suffering as laid out in Art. 1 of the Treaty.

In this regard, we continue to support the work on a Five-Year Strategy for the Arms Trade Treaty and look forward to discussing its draft elements later this week,

We now find ourselves at a crucial moment that makes the ATT more relevant than ever. As we speak, brutal aggression, armed conflict, and terrorism have devastating impacts on people all around the world, remaining a challenge to the international community. We mourn the victims of these conflicts and call on all parties to armed conflict to exercise utmost restraint and to act in accordance with International law, including International Humanitarian Law and international human rights law.

However, the fight against illicit arms trade remains essential in this regard as well. Therefore, universal and strict adherence to Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty, as well as their effective implementation, are essential in order to reduce human suffering.

In this context, the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty must remain a prime objective of States Parties and the wider stakeholder community. As such, we warmly welcome Vanuatu and Ecuador as new States Parties. While the growing number of States Parties is evidence of positive momentum, significant effort remains necessary to further drive universalization.

Mr. President,

With a look to the ensuing debate this week, there are some specific points we would like to highlight:

- First, the proliferation and escalation of crises leading to conflict-related sexual violence is alarming. Research by UNIDIR shows that between 70-90% of all incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involve weapons and firearms,. The Treaty explicitly requires States Parties to duly take into account the risks of gender-based violence in arms export assessments,. Therefore, we welcome the operationalization of the ATT Gender Focal Point mechanism. We want to use this opportunity to thank the representatives of Mexico, Spain, and Togo for their indispensable work in this regard and for their willingness to take crucial first steps in a stronger integration of gender-related questions into the work of the ATT.
- Second, we wish to underline the multidisciplinary character of the ATT across all pillars of the UN's work and its contribution to the SDGs and Agenda 2030. This unique character makes it relevant for a plethora of UN discussions. It can draw from a wide range of expertise in the fields of export controls, crime prevention, and human rights both from States Parties as well as a wide range of stakeholders. Austria welcomes the open and inclusive format of discussions within the ATT to exchange views on substantive issues, which have proven useful to foster implementation and strengthen the treaty as a whole.

Mr. President,

We look forward to this week's discussions including on crucial issues such as universalization, gender-related commitments, and treaty implementation. Let me assure you of Austria's constructive engagement in all of them.

Thank you for your attention.