

**United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty
18-28 March 2013**

**Statement on behalf of United Nations agencies involved in humanitarian action
Delivered by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos
21 March 2013**

Checked against delivery

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to deliver a statement before the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. I am delivering this statement on behalf of six United Nations agencies involved in humanitarian action.

[Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)]

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me welcome the convening of this conference. It demonstrates the commitment of States to address the consequences of the poorly regulated trade in arms and to build on the progress made to date towards the adoption of an arms trade treaty.

This conference is important for many reasons.

It is an opportunity for States to agree to global, binding rules to regulate the trade in arms.

It is an opportunity for States to take decisive action to address the adverse humanitarian, human rights and development consequences of the poorly regulated trade in arms and the corresponding widespread availability and misuse of weapons.

It is an opportunity to reduce the pervasive killing, wounding of civilians, including women and children, and the commission of other serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

It is an opportunity to reduce and even prevent human displacement, both within and across borders. At the end of 2011, the number of people forcibly displaced by conflict worldwide was in excess of 42 million people, including 26.4 million internally displaced persons and 15.4 million refugees. In many cases, the violence that drove them from their homes was fuelled by the widespread availability and misuse of weapons, including small arms. Providing them with the shelter, food, medical and other forms of humanitarian assistance which they so desperately need as a result comes at a staggering cost to the international community.

This conference is also an opportunity to address the frequent suspension and delay of life-saving humanitarian and development operations because of threats to the safety of, or actual

attacks against, our staff and those of other organizations. Between 2003 and 2012, 809 humanitarian workers were killed in armed attacks and a further 817 were injured.

And it is an opportunity to reduce the violent crime and insecurity that plague so many societies, undermine development, fuel conflict and poverty and exacerbate sexual and other forms of gender-based violence and violence against children.

Mr. President,

We recognize that the current draft treaty text contains many of the elements needed for the effective control of the global arms trade.

However, if States are to seize this opportunity fully to address the human cost of the poorly regulated arms trade they must strive to go beyond the current draft and agree a comprehensive and robust treaty that contains the following if it is to be effective:

First, it must require States to assess the risk that serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law may be committed with the weapons being transferred, including through diversion to unintended end-users. It must also require States to refrain from authorizing transfers where there is a substantial – rather than “overriding” – risk that the weapons will be used to commit such violations.

Second, the Treaty must include within its scope all conventional weapons. This includes small arms as well as parts and components. As the United Nations Secretary-General observed in his 2011 report on small arms, the trade in small arms is poorly regulated. In many countries, because of a lack of regulation and controls or a lack of capacity to implement those that exist, it is far too easy for small arms to fall into the hands of those who use them to commit violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Third, such a treaty must include ammunition within its scope. For armed conflict to continue, supplies of ammunition need to be continuously renewed. Without ammunition existing stocks of conventional weapons cannot be used. Again, as the Secretary-General noted in his report on small arms, the popularity of certain types of weapons among armed groups is linked to the easy availability of their ammunition. Preventing resupply of ammunition in situations of high risk to civilians should be a priority. Regulating the transfer of ammunition is as important as regulating the transfer of the weapons themselves.

Fourth, the Treaty must not contain loopholes. It should cover all types of transfer, including activities such as transit, transshipment, loans, leases, gifts as well as brokering and closely-related activities. And it should not exclude arms transfers from the treaty’s scope on the grounds of obligations undertaken with regard to “other instruments” or as a result of contractual obligations under “defence cooperation agreements”.

Mr. President,

We strongly urge Member States to place the humanitarian, human rights and development concerns at the forefront of their discussions by taking these elements into account and striving for a comprehensive and robust Arms Trade Treaty. A treaty that makes people and communities safer by reducing the overwhelming human cost of inadequate controls on arms transfers.