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Media Release for Tuesday, December 23, 2014

Arms Trade Treaty enters into force without Canada

New international laws regulating the \$85 billion (US\$) global trade in arms and ammunition enter into force tomorrow.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will become international law on December 24, 2014.

Project Ploughshares, based in Waterloo, Ontario, has worked for more than 15 years to make the ATT a reality, most recently as part of the global civil society Control Arms Coalition.

Sadly, the Government of Canada will be absent from the Christmas Eve celebration. Canada participated in negotiations for the ATT and voted to approve the text in the UN General Assembly in April 2013. But subsequently Canada has not signed the ATT, the only member of NATO that has failed to do so.

This treaty aims to set the highest possible standards for cross-border transfers of arms and ammunition and to cut off the supply of weapons to dictators and human rights abusers around the world.

*“The ATT is the most important conventional weapons control treaty of this generation,” said **John Siebert, Executive Director of Project Ploughshares.** “It is highly regrettable that Canada is not part of this historic occasion. As more states join the treaty – Israel became a signatory just last week – Canada’s absence becomes more stark. Why isn’t Canada party to this international effort to end irresponsible weapons transfers across borders?”*

Under the new rules in the ATT, before any arms transfer takes place, it must be assessed against strict criteria, including whether the arms might be used for human rights violations or war crimes. If there is a substantial risk the transfer will breach this criteria, then it cannot be authorized.

According to **Control Arms Coalition Director, Anna Macdonald:** *“Civilians have paid far too high a price this year. From Aleppo to Peshawar, from Gaza to South Sudan, we have seen the devastating impact of the poorly-regulated arms trade.*

“For too long, arms and ammunition have been traded with few questions asked about whose lives they will destroy. The new Arms Trade Treaty, which enters into force tomorrow, will bring that to an end.

“If robustly-implemented, this treaty has the potential to save many lives and offer much-needed protection to vulnerable civilians around the world. It is now – finally - against international law to put weapons into the hands of human rights abusers and dictators. December 24 marks the dawn of a new era.”

Informal discussions between governments who have ratified the treaty have been taking place this year to prepare the ground for implementation of the treaty.

The next round of discussions is due to take place in Trinidad and Tobago in February 2015. Planning is also underway for the treaty’s first Conference of States Parties (CSP), the annual meeting where states will meet to assess progress on implementation. This is expected to take place in late summer 2015.

To date, 128 states have signed the ATT, with 60 having ratified it. These include major arms exporters such as France, the UK and Germany.

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Note to Editors

The Control Arms Coalition, of which Project Ploughshares is a founding member, is a global civil society movement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) campaigning for tough controls on the international arms trade. Control Arms is made up of over 100 organizations, working in over 120 countries. It includes major international NGOs such as Oxfam, Amnesty International and Saferworld, as well as many regional and national level organizations.

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