

**UN AGENCY CHIEFS CALL FOR COMPREHENSIVE AND ROBUST
ARMS TRADE TREATY**

The following statement is issued on behalf of Valerie Amos, United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator; Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme; António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

(New York, 16 February 2012) As States meet this week in New York for the final preparatory meeting ahead of July's United Nations Diplomatic Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, we would like to articulate the key elements that we, the heads of several United Nations humanitarian, development and human rights organizations with extensive operations in the field, believe must be included in such a treaty if it is to effectively address the human cost – that is to say, the appalling humanitarian and development consequences – of the poorly regulated global trade in conventional weapons.

We recognize that important efforts have been made at the national and regional level to regulate the trade in conventional weapons. These efforts are laudable and attest to the recognition by Member States of the need for regulation. However, the current patchwork of controls is simply not adequate. The human cost of such inadequate controls, and the corresponding widespread availability and misuse of weapons, is unacceptably high.

This manifests itself in several ways: in the killing, wounding, and rape of civilians – including children, the most vulnerable of all – and the perpetration of other serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law; and in the displacement of people, sometimes on a massive scale, within and across borders. At the end of 2010, an estimated 27.5 million people were internally displaced as a result of conflict, while millions more have sought refuge abroad. In many cases, the armed violence that drove them from their homes was fuelled by the widespread availability and misuse of weapons.

These millions of women, girls, boys and men are in desperate need of or dependent on food, shelter, medical and other forms of humanitarian and development assistance – the financial cost of which is borne by many of the Member States taking part in this week's preparatory meeting in New York. In December 2011, the United Nations appealed for over US\$7 billion to help 51 million people cope with humanitarian emergencies around the world this year, many of whom are affected by conflict and armed violence and subject to a range of human rights and humanitarian law violations. The value of the global authorized trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition is also estimated at over US\$7 billion per year.

For additional information, please contact:

OCHA New York: Amanda Pitt, +1 917 442 1810, pitta@un.org

OCHA Geneva: Elisabeth Byrs, +4179 473 5126, byrs@un.org

www.un.org www.unocha.org

Another dire consequence of inadequate controls on arms transfers and the corresponding widespread availability and misuse of weapons is the frequent suspension or 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 2000 and 2010, more than 780 humanitarian workers were killed in armed attacks and a further 689 were injured.

There has been important action by Member States. First, the General Assembly's recognition in 2006 that the absence of commonly-agreed international standards for the transfer of conventional arms contributes to conflict, the displacement of people, crime and terrorism and thereby undermines peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development.

Second, the agreement in the General Assembly in 2009 to prepare a binding treaty containing the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms providing an opportunity to reduce the human cost associated with inadequate controls on arms transfers and to contribute to improved safety and security for communities affected by conflict and armed violence. It is an opportunity that Member States must seize to the fullest extent.

On the basis of our experience in the field, a treaty containing the highest possible common international standards requires the following:

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 users; and that States refrain from authorizing transfers where there is a clear risk that the weapons will be used to commit such violations.

Second, it must include within its scope all conventional weapons. This includes small arms. 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, it is too easy for small arms to fall into the hands of those who use them to commit violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law.

Third, it must include ammunition within its scope. Supplies of ammunition need to be continuously renewed and 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 due to the availability of ammunition. Preventing resupply in situations of high risk to civilian populations should be a priority. Regulating the transfer of ammunition is as important as regulating the transfer of the weapons themselves.

Fourth, it must ensure that there are no loopholes by covering all types of transfer, including activities such as transit, transshipment, loans, leases as well as brokering and closely-related activities.

As the discussions continue, we would strongly urge Member States to take these elements into account and strive for a comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty that will have a powerful impact in making people safer by reducing the human cost of inadequate controls on arms transfers.

For additional information, please contact:
OCHA New York: Amanda Pitt, +1 917 442 1810, pitta@un.org
OCHA Geneva: Elisabeth Byrs, +4179 473 5126, byrs@un.org
www.un.org www.unocha.org