



Southern China International MUN

*Disarmament Committee: On measures to promote
transparency in the use of conventional arms
Agenda overseen by: Cici Cheung*

1. Description of the Issue

1.1 History of the issue

Conventional arms are weapons that do not cause mass destruction but inflict dramatic damage. Some prime examples are battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles, attack helicopters, warships, missile and missile launchers, landmines, cluster munitions, small arms, and lights weapons and ammunition. These are principal tools widely used in wars, conflicts, and crime settings (UNODA).

The use of conventional weapons yields devastating human costs. Armed conflicts injure, kill, and force people to flee by destroying the infrastructure and housing. They harm economic and political stability, damage the environment, and increase dependency on foreign assistance. Governments would also prioritize purchasing such weapons for commercial interests over resources to satisfy basic needs (International Peace Bureau).

The United Nations permits countries to own and use conventional arms according to international laws. Some particular weapons, however, cause humanitarian concerns due to their designs and the way they are used. Early efforts to address such concerns occurred in the 19th century, like the establishment of the International Humanitarian Law, which intended to “protect citizens from the indiscriminate effects of conventional weapons and mass atrocities” (ICRC). Nonetheless, numerous massacres and violence are still being reported frequently.

To further control the arms, the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects came into force in 1983. It has 114 States parties with 75 extending their agreement to apply restraints to internal armed conflicts. To regular arms trade, the Wassenaar Arrangement, the first global multilateral arrangement on export controls for conventional weapons, began operations in September 1996. It calls on the 42

member states to make voluntary information exchanges and notifications on their purchasing activities and reaffirm the commitments to preventing terrorist groups and individuals from acquiring conventional arms (Kimball).

The UN also established a Register of Conventional Arms in 1991. It is a unique international security instrument aiming to resolve proliferation challenges. It thrives to promote transparency in arms transfers and discourage arms accumulation to build confidence and serve as an early warning mechanism. In a decade, more than 100 countries have reported annually to the register, and a total of 164 member states have reported at least once. With these encouraging figures, there are still some weaknesses in the system. It only covers seven categories of weapons: battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers. It is also voluntary for countries to report the types of equipment being transferred, making it harder to regulate (International Peace Bureau).

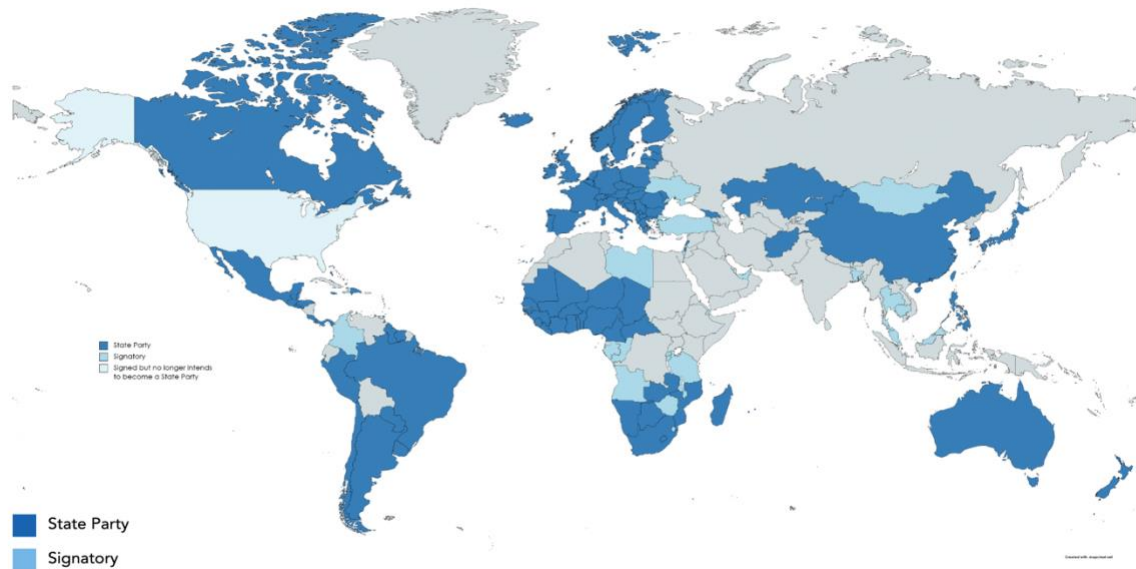
1.2 Recent developments

In 2001, the Firearms Protocol was launched as a framework “to control and regulate licit arms and arms flows, prevent their diversion into the illegal circuit, facilitate the investigation and prosecution of related offences without hampering legitimate transfers” (UNODC). It includes four major intentions: establish clear definitions, adopt security measures, create a governmental authoritative system, and ensure the tracing of firearms. There are some specific measures working towards achieving the goals, including confiscation, seizure, and destruction of firearms illicitly manufactured or trafficked. Each firearm will maintain a record of at least 10 years in order to identify and trace its application. The issuance of licenses for the import and export of firearms and transit authorization prior to their actual transfers. Firearms will also be marked to permit the identification of the manufacturer of the firearm, and the country of and year of import.

Moreover, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) was adopted in 2001. Member states agreed to ensure the proper and reliable markings on weapons to improve cooperation internationally. In addition, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) was later granted in 2005, further strengthening the global interrelated weapon tracing goal. The ideals are also part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

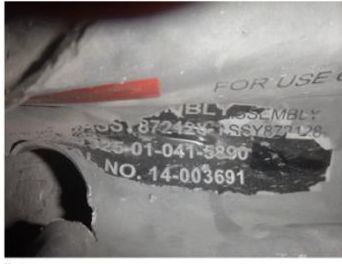
A more recent advancement is the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013. It aims to regulate international trade in conventional arms by establishing high standards, as well as to eradicate illicit trade and diversion of conventional arms. The treaty contributes to peace, security, stability, reduction of human suffering, promotion of cooperation, transparency, and responsible actions among global communities. The ATT has 113 state parties and 28 signatories, as visually represented on the map. North Korea, Iran, and Syria account for the three votes against. China and Russia, the world leaders in

conventional weapon import and export, abstained along with 21 other nations.



In the 68th General Assembly committee meeting, country representatives pointed out some loopholes in the ATT. Even though the treaty was adopted, conflict raged in Syria that had violated numerous human rights that were drafted to be prevented. This tragic situation highlights the need for legally binding common international standards on convention weapon transfers. Iran representatives also point out how the treaty had been redirected to narrow national agendas and regional policies rather than covering a large framework. Many also argue that conventional weapons have the same impacts as weapons of mass destruction. In Laos, almost four decades after the Vietnam War, such arms continue to kill over 100 people annually (United Nations).

Several wars occurred in the recent decade as well. In 2011, a wave of pro-democracy protests, the Arab Spring, spread across the Middle East and North Africa. Yemen was one of the first countries to be involved in the crisis. Its uprising evolved into a civil war agitated by foreign intervention (Encyclopædia Britannica). Saudi Arabia is a major country that attacked Yemen, and over half of its conventional arms were supplied by the United Kingdom, including typhoon and tornado aircraft, paveway bombs, and brimstone and stormshadow missiles (Campaign Against Arms Trade). Weapons that the United States sold to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were also found in Yemen, with very specific evidence provided by CNN as shown in the examples below (Elbagir et al.). The United Nations estimate that the Yemen Civil War had killed 377,000 people by the end of 2021, and over 150,000 deaths were the direct result of the armed conflict (Campaign Against Arms Trade).



Mwatana

APRIL 30, 2015

Strike on home kills one, injures six

Coalition jets drop a bomb on a residential neighborhood in al-Basateen District, Dar Sa'ed District, Aden Governorate, according to Mwatana. The bomb lands on the home of Halfa' al-Zawqari, who was killed in the attack, while six others, including a young girl and two women, are wounded, Mwatana says.

CNN found that the National Stock Number (NSN) and part number on this remnant are those of a GBU-12 laser guided bomb manufactured by Raytheon, a US defense contractor. The bomb weighs 230-330 kilograms and contains 87 kilograms of High explosive H6.

GBU-12 Paveway II guided bomb

MAY 26, 2015, OCTOBER 9, 2015

Airstrikes hit a school

A coalition airstrike hits the Ahmed Bakri School in the al-Taheta area of Hodeidah on two separate occasions, according to Mwatana. There are no recorded casualties, the group says.

CNN found that the Commercial And Government Entity (CAGE) number on the shrapnel -- "96214" -- sources this weapon to Raytheon. "ADAPTER ASSY FORWARD" may relate to a GBU forward control unit used to modify a roughly 450-kilogram MK-83 bomb. It's unclear which of the two strikes produced these remnants.

MK-83 bomb modified with a GBU



Mwatana



Mwatana

SEPTEMBER 24, 2016

Apartment bombing kills 6

An airstrike in the Dahar district of Ibb province targeted an apartment building, killing six people and wounding one, Mwatana says. Eyewitnesses tell the group they fled, terrified after the explosion and returned to find an entire family, their neighbors, wounded and dying in the street.

The CAGE number "96214" on this part belongs to Raytheon. The Manufacturing Parts Number (or SKU) indicates this is the fin of a guidance kit that may have been used to modify an MK-82 bomb.

MK-82 bomb modified with guidance kit

OCTOBER 5, 2016

Man killed in cluster bomb strike on fishing boat

A cluster munition fired by Saudi-led coalition forces hits a fishing boat on the coast of Al-Hima village in Hodeidah Governorate, according to Mwatana. One man is killed, the group says.

CNN found that the CAGE number "18894" on the remnants correlates to the US government's Air Armament Center, a division of the Air Force Materiel Command. An arms expert for Mwatana found the parts number "ASSY 8562837-5" linked to a large-scale anti-armor submunition, one of four carried by the US-manufactured cluster bomb BLU-108. Each submunition dangles under a parachute at a predetermined altitude, scans through a built-in infrared device, and explodes when it finds a target or upon impact.

BLU-108 submunitions contained within a Sensor Fuzed Weapon



The Myanmar Civil War is an ongoing conflict since the 2021 military coup. A large range of conventional arms is used by the soldiers against their own people. 13 countries, including the United States, France, India, and Japan, are exporting almost all categories of weapons to Myanmar. A variety of firearms were also produced locally, including sniper rifles, MA-1 semi-automatic rifles, and Uzi-replica BA-93 and BA-94 sub-machine guns. It is estimated that 23, 521 people had been killed in the civil war by July 2022 (Special Advisory Council for Myanmar).

The Russian-Ukraine War is another new situation that appeared recently. On March 10th, the Ministry of Defense confirmed that Russia is using the TOS-1A weapon system in Ukraine. Protocols mentioned some regulations for the use of such incendiary arms, yet such a type of flamethrower is not specifically banned under international laws. Ukraine also introduced new weapons such as suicide drones and harpoon anti-ship missiles which are allowed for use under the current regulations. In both countries, the casualties accumulated to over 200,000, harming social stability and economic well-being (Burrow).

There are more ongoing wars and conflicts that delegates should conduct research into.

Key Terms

Conventional arms - Weapons that do not cause mass destruction but inflict dramatic damage. These are principal tools widely used in wars, conflicts, and crime settings (UNODA). The use of conventional weapons yields devastating human costs. Armed conflicts injure, kill, and force people to flee by destroying the infrastructure and housing. They harm economic and political stability, damage the environment, and increase dependency on foreign assistance (International Peace Bureau).

Illicit trade – the illegal production or distribution of a good or service under a legislature. It includes trade that different jurisdictions strictly oppose, or sometimes legal under one law system but illegal in others. Illicit trade occurs in black markets or in legitimate markets. It is a growing threat in the digital-driven globalized economy (UNCTAD).

Seven Categories of Convention Arms – the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms defines seven categories of convention arms with the description below. Each type of weapon is used for different conditions and is favoured by different countries (UNROCA).

	Category I	Battle tanks	Tracked or wheeled self-propelled armoured fighting vehicles with high cross-country mobility and a high-level of self-protection, weighing 16.5 metric tons unladen weight, with a high muzzle velocity direct fire main gun of at least 75 millimetres calibre.
	Category II	Armoured combat vehicles	Tracked, semi-tracked or wheeled self-propelled vehicles, with armoured protection and cross-country capability, either: (a) designed and equipped to transport a squad of four or more infantrymen, or (b) armed with an integral or organic weapon of at least 12.5 millimetres calibre or a missile launcher.
	Category III	Large-calibre artillery systems	Guns, howitzers, artillery pieces, combining the characteristics of a gun or a howitzer, mortars or multiple-launch rocket systems, capable of engaging surface targets by delivering primarily indirect fire, with a calibre of 75 millimetres and above.
	Category IV	Combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAV)	Includes fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing aerial vehicles as defined below: (a) Manned fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing aircraft, designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided missiles, unguided rockets, bombs, guns, cannons or other weapons of destruction, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized electronic warfare, suppression of air defence or reconnaissance missions. (b) Unmanned fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing aircraft, designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided missiles, unguided rockets, bombs, guns, cannons or other weapons of destruction. The terms "combat aircraft" and "unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAV)" do not include primary trainer aircraft, unless designed, equipped or modified as described above.
	Category V	Attack helicopters	Rotary-wing aircraft designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided or unguided anti-armour, air-to-surface, air-to-subsurface, or air-to-air weapons and equipped with an integrated fire control and aiming system for these weapons, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized reconnaissance or electronic warfare missions.
	Category VI	Warships	Vessels or submarines armed and equipped for military use with a standard displacement of 500 metric tons or above, and those with a standard displacement of less than 500 metric tons, equipped for launching missiles with a range of at least 25 kilometres or torpedoes with similar range.
	Category VII	Missiles and missile launchers	(a) Guided or unguided rockets, ballistic or cruise missiles capable of delivering a warhead or weapon of destruction to a range of at least 25 kilometres, and means designed or modified specifically for launching such missiles or rockets, if not covered by categories I through VI. For the purpose of the Register, this sub-category includes remotely piloted vehicles with the characteristics for missiles as defined above but does not include ground-to-air missiles. (b) Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems (MANPADS)

2. Emphasis of the Discourse

2.1 Stance of intergovernmental organizations

Most collaborative efforts toward combating the issue lie within the UN framework and regulations. The **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** is one example of an independent intergovernmental organization. It entered into force on April 29, 1997, with 193 member states, aiming to “oversee the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons” (OPCW). The OPCW puts immense attention on the transparency between the production and transfer of arms. It requires nations to provide baseline data and performs regular inspections. It highlights that such sharing of information not only guarantees the security of citizens but also positively interferes with the overall development and usage of weapons. Syria joined the OPCW in 2013 after being accused of violating the treaties by using chemical weapons. It declared massive stockpiles of such arms that were subsequently destroyed. OPCW was able to bring Syria to commit to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and thus received the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize (RT).

2.2 Stance of developed countries

Developed countries account for some of the largest exporters of conventional weapons to the global market. The United States, United Kingdom, France, Japan, and Germany are ranking top under this issue. There are two main reasons for their contribution. Some argue that they sell arms as a tool “to strengthen the military capability of allies and strategic partners to increase regional stability abroad” (Thrall). Economic motives, on the other hand, are another driving force. Donald Trump, the 45th US President, mentioned that trading with Saudi Arabia will lead to additional employment opportunities, tremendous economic development, and overall better wealth for the United States.

The United States had been sharing information on exports, imports, military holdings, national production, and small arms/lightweight weapons from 2001 to 2020. However, the country is no longer providing such data starting in 2021, and only a limited amount of information can be acquired from the trading partners. Based on the export statistics, there are some enormous differences between the number of arms the United States reported and the actual amount other nations have received, hinting at a transparency issue. For instance, for Category II armoured combat vehicles, the US found itself exporting 13566 weapons, yet only 5244 were acknowledged by trading partners. This is almost a triple effect. Another example is the Category III large-calibre artillery system, which conversely, the US reported to only have exported 4656 but more than 20000 were granted by military allies (UNROCA). Imports, on the other hand, also indicate some interesting patterns. For all types of conventional arms, the country is announcing a significantly lower amount of import compared to what is exported by trading partners.

The United States is exporting considerable amounts of arms to Saudi Arabia, Turkey,

Morocco, Israel, Egypt, etc. All these developing nations offer economic and social benefits to the US. Some of their economies have a growing GDP and an active workforce that offers a guarantee in return on investment, for instance, they can support the US through financial bonding and trading of other specialized goods. Countries, like Egypt, also offer political and social advantages due to the location that allows activities to expand into the Middle East and Africa, prosperous areas with great potential. Moreover, the United States is importing a lot more from developed countries, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, and France for conventional arms.

In the United Kingdom, the differences between the number the country itself reported and of its trading partners for exports and imports are significantly lower. It is mainly exporting the South Asian and African nations and importing from other developed countries plus Venezuela (UNROCA).

In France, it is also exporting annually to developing nations among Asia, America, and Africa, yet it is only importing Category VII missiles and missile launchers from other developed countries. Reports are sometimes available regarding France's test launches of missiles, and the country believes such type of launch can demonstrate its excellence of high technology (UNROCA).

2.3 Stance of developing countries

China has a powerful conventional arm with most imports coming from Russia and Ukraine, and exports to South Asian nations (UNROCA). The country is progressively deploying new arrays of weapons, especially missiles.

The varied and abundant types of weapons in China offer it political strength and status, yet other countries are claiming that some of the Chinese use of conventional arms violate international agreements. In August 2020, the country launched a series of ballistic missiles into the South China Sea. This military exercise, according to the United States, exceeds its sovereign territory, and its continuous efforts to remain in control over the area are contested by at least five other countries. China admitted that it has carried out drills in waters and airspace within the region but did not mention the missiles outright. The use of conventional arms in China remains vague, but it is unarguable that the country reveals its ownership of highly injurious missiles, such as DF-26 and DF-21D, as a mean to reinforce its adversaries' understanding that it does not fear war (Lendon).

Iran is in a relatively unique situation concerning the use of conventional arms. The international community has long been concerned about its military arsenal, and since the 1979 revolution, several embargoes have been imposed. In the 2000s, Iran's expanding uranium enrichment program again threatens the globe with its lack of transparency and potential nuclear powers, yet Tehran responded that this was only a method to produce peaceful nuclear energy for medical research and as an alternative to oil. The United Nations established several resolutions which limited the trade or sale of conventional arms and ballistic missile-related items to the country. The latest UN embargo was lifted on October

18, 2020 (United States Institute of Peace).

The embargoes have drastically limited Iran's financial abilities to create a strong conventional military force and have impoverished the country. To prevent such an experience from reoccurring, the leaders are developing a self-sufficient and radical deterrence posture. It is said that "deterrence relies on a multi-layered asymmetrical approach consisting of missile systems, irregular naval warfare, and proxy networks that can carry out terror attacks on opponents in the region and beyond" (Krzyzaniak). Specifically, Iran is heavily investing in developing indigenous ballistic missile and missile defence systems to compensate for its limitation in the air force. With its own solid fuel, Iran has what is regarded as the largest missile arsenal that can carry nuclear warheads in the region.

Iran's longstanding support for militias across the Middle East and its military intervention in Syria have been frustrating for the United States. The US strongly advocates for an extended embargo on Iran, since the country "fired ballistic missiles at its neighbours, mined and captured oil tankers, smuggled weapons into conflict zones, and shot down a civilian passenger jet" within a year (United States Institute of Peace). Nonetheless, since Iran has successfully initiated a domestic production system for conventional arms, the extension or abolishment of embargoes may not have a significant impact. The country should consider selling its weapons to other developing countries, such as Syria, for economic gains, but no data is available on such exports (UNROCA).

3. Possible Solutions

3.1 In favor of developed countries

The United Nations established a series of confidence-building measures that aim "to prevent hostilities, avert escalation, reduce military tension, and build mutual trust between countries" (UNODA). One of the main efforts is the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA). As mentioned previously, this annual reporting mechanism has existed for over two decades, and it has captured over 90% of the global arms trade. Confidence is the key to such voluntary solutions, which developed countries are proudly known for. Such advanced nations present a mature readiness by the authorities to have some key national defence policies scrutinized by media and academia. The United Kingdom, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Japan, and other developed nations are reporting every year since the 1990s. On the other hand, developing nations are rarely reporting through UNROCA.

The method appears to be successful and offers a platform for countries to build trust, it may be implemented in other parts of the world by forcing annual disclosure instead of the current voluntary structure. Even though some countries may not be willing to share comprehensive information, UNROCA is capable of predicting a nation's imports and exports based on others' statistics.

3.2 In favor of developing countries

Developing countries are not sharing as much information on their use of conventional arms, and one reason for this is the lack of tangible benefits. Unlike developed countries which use disclosure as a method of strengthening their power and deterrence, developing countries do not have such an advanced weaponry system to exhibit. Inspired by the embargos asserted on Iran which significantly restrained its economy, the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations can provide financial aid to the developing nations that are actively responding to the transparency call.

Financial aids include support in transporting imports and exports to other countries, which facilitates international bonding and trade, while also raising the efficiency of domestic industries. Subsidies could also be provided in terms of scarce resources such as energy. This can prevent countries to use finding alternative energies as an excuse for mining and exploiting chemicals that could be used in conventional weapons.

Since developing countries are the main target in this issue of transparent use of conventional arms, financial aid is certainly more suited for them compared to developed nations. Yet, if such monetary benefits are introduced, different levels of support must be provided to reduce the potential of widening disparity and facilitating monopolies. In other words, this solution is only to bring developing countries to an equilibrium as the developed, and long-term actions to maintain the information disclosure still need to be discussed.

4. Keep in Mind the Following

When researching a country's stance on this topic, it is crucial to analyze its current attitude in sharing information with the public, whether its allies and adversaries are sharing a similar amount of data, and whether it has a strong military force. Remember that countries are confident to disclose their use of conventional arms when they are already powerful on a global scale or when they are looking forward to receiving valuable feedback from other nations that can help them enhance their status, or both. Therefore, start from your country, but consider the international image, and most importantly, what your country wants to see from others. Some questions to guide you through your research are the following:

1. Is your country an active and committed participant of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms platform?
2. What are some differences in the number of exports and imports your country reported compared to its trading partners?
3. Looking through the reports your country submitted to UNROCA, what are the common types of conventional weapons it imported? What are their uses?
4. Who are the political and military allies and adversaries of your country? How committed are they to the UNROCA?

5. Does your country contribute to any wars, conflicts, or embargoes in any region on the globe? Is it trying to supply or restrain weapon use in any way?
6. Which type of conventional arm is most valuable to your country? Can such arms be produced domestically?
7. If the trade of conventional arms becomes 98% transparent (currently 90%), what will happen to the international market? How will your country be influenced?

5. Evaluation

Conventional arms pose threats to society when they are misused, killing civilians and damaging the economy. Progressive efforts appear to improve the transparent trade, production, and use of such weapons, and in recent decades, have accomplished recognizable success. Nonetheless, some disclosure systems are deflected from their original aim and became a tool for developed countries to further strengthen their dominance in military forces while hindering the information sharing of less-advanced nations. Increasing transparency on a global scale is essential for every part of the world to better ensure the safety of its people and avoid unnecessary conflicts. The current issue centers around developing nations, while the developed nations play an undeniable role in shaping the overall image. After pulling all nations to a similar level, more efforts should focus on maintaining balance and transparency in the future. Delegates need to be thoughtful and innovative in alleviating this harsh condition. Good luck.

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