Background
On 24 December 2014, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) entered into force, following its opening for signature on 3 June 2013. This followed more than a decade of campaigning and seven years of work at the United Nations, at the end of which, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the Treaty by 154 votes to 3. At the time of writing, there are 72 states parties and 59 signatories.

The ATT is the first treaty aimed at reducing humanitarian suffering by bringing the conventional arms trade under control. Implemented effectively, it will create new global norms for the transfers of arms and ammunition, assessed against the risk of misuse.

Current context
The first Conference of States Parties to the ATT took place from 24-27 August 2015 in Cancun, Mexico. It followed five informal and formal preparatory meetings that took place over the previous twelve months and represented a critical opportunity for states parties to make decisions to ensure that the ATT will be implemented robustly.

Progress was made in many areas at the CSP. The adoption of the Rules of Procedure came early on the second day of the meeting. Financial rules were also adopted, although agreeing on a budget for both the ATT Secretariat and the second CSP is scheduled for an extraordinary meeting scheduled for January 2016.

Following two rounds of informal voting, the CSP decided that the ATT Secretariat will be located in Geneva, and that Dumisani Dladla of South Africa will serve as Provisional Head of Secretariat until the 2016 CSP, at which time a process will be undertaken to select a longer-term Head of the Secretariat. A Management Committee to support the work of the ATT Secretariat was also established, including the Czech Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, France, Jamaica, and Japan.

Decisions were also made about CSP 2016. Ambassador Emmanuel Imohe of Nigeria was confirmed as its President-designate, and Costa Rica, Finland, Montenegro and New Zealand will serve as Vice Presidents.

Reporting was the weakest outcome of the CSP. Considerable effort was spent ahead of and during the CSP in developing draft reporting templates, with the intention that the CSP would recommend these for use by states parties when preparing their national initial and annual reports. However, in the draft final report of the CSP, states parties decided instead only to “take note … of the reporting templates” and to “establish an informal working group on reporting” to continue template development. While it was disappointment that the CSP did not
make a stronger recommendation in support of the templates, a number of significant problems still existed with the substance of the latest drafts, and further work by a working group is clearly needed.

Apart from the CSP, the last year has seen continued emphasis on increasing understanding about implementation issues. The Control Arms Coalition has continued to organise and participate in workshops in all regions, as well as produce resources to support implementation. These include an implementation guide for Pacific states; a report on the reporting practices of states parties and signatories; and a series of legal surveys of the rules and practices of other comparable treaty regimes.

Multiple meetings of the Expert Group on Treaty Implementation, which includes governmental and non-governmental experts, have also been convened. Two briefings papers from the group address information exchange under the ATT and preventing diversion, with a third to be presented at the CSP. The Arms Trade Treaty-Baseline Assessment Project (ATT-BAP) is another initiative aiding implementation. Through a survey, the project helps states understand the obligations of the ATT as well as review their existing policies and practices.

Meanwhile, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is producing research and training for civil society and export licence officials to ensure the effective implementation of the ATT’s provisions related to preventing gender-based violence. WILPF also monitors all international ATT-related meetings and produces a daily monitor with analysis and information.

The Control Arms Secretariat published the first edition of its “ATT Monitor,” an independent civil society monitoring mechanism on ATT implementation, which will be a resource for both states and civil society.

These civil society initiatives complement those organized by governments and the UN, such as the practical training course on ATT Implementation created by UNLIREC and resources being developed by UNODA.

Recommendations for governments

During First Committee:
- Delegations should support an ATT resolution that calls for strong and effective Treaty implementation.
- Delegations should encourage continued universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty.
- Delegates should participate in and contribute to the substantive discussions taking place in side events and elsewhere in order to share expertise and strengthen capacity for the robust implementation of the ATT.

Beyond First Committee:
- States parties must implement the ATT robustly and in a transparent manner.
- States parties should develop robust, comprehensive, and public reporting templates.
- States should share best practices and provide implementation support through information exchange and resources.
- Signatories should ratify the ATT as soon as possible, and non-signatories should accede.