



# United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**Working towards political stability**

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**Committee:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**Topic:** Reinforcing transparency in the fabrication and acquisition of Weaponry

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## II. Introduction

### Committee

The General Assembly was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, and it occupies a central position as the policy-making, representative organ of the United Nations. Consisting of all 193 Members of the United Nations (each one having one vote), it provides an assembly to discuss any international issues covered by the Charter (the founding document of the UN, a global organization that aims to promote peace, cooperation, and human rights.) It also plays a principal role in the process of making international laws and rules. The General Assembly meets from September to December each year, and as much as needed following the New Year.

Its primary role is to discuss issues and make recommendations, though it has no power to enforce its resolutions. Other functions include adding new members; selecting members of the Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council, supervising the activities of the other UN organs, from which the General Assembly receives reports, and participating in the election of judges to the International Court of Justice and the selection of the secretary-general. Decisions normally are made by a simple majority vote. On important questions, however, a two-thirds majority is needed.

### Topic

Reinforcing transparency in the fabrication and acquisition of Weaponry supports the idea that the number of weapons transfers, arms, nuclear warheads, etc. should not be something that should be a state secret.

This means that if all countries deal more transparently with the information that is shared about their weapons, there would be much more trust, not only between the countries but also between government and citizens, especially in today's world. This is crucial considering that those weapons can pose a threat to a country's security.

With more transparency, the illegal acquisition and fabrication of illegal weapons would be more easily spotted and if laws are imposed, it could be treated with more severity.

### III. Definitions of Key Terms

#### Transparency

Transparency: Transparency implies accountability, communication, and openness. The act of Transparency is crucial in companies and organizations so that it can be assured that no illegal things are being practiced. In the case of fabrication and/or acquisition of weaponry, Transparency would imply that Countries should share what weaponry is being fabricated or bought by them to hold themselves accountable.

#### ICRC

ICRC stands for 'The International Committee of the Red Cross' It's a non-governmental and neutral organization that aims to protect the lives of humans that are in jeopardy because of armed conflicts or situations of violence.

#### UNROCA United Nations Register of Conventional Arms

The UNROCA is a register in the UN that keeps track of the member countries' weapon transfer in 7 categories (major conventional arms, smaller conventional arms, etc.) The UN encourages the member states to report on such matters to further strengthen international ties with other governments and to showcase trust and domestic confidence to their citizens.

#### ATT 'Arms Trade treaty

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) regulates the international trade in conventional weapons. It helps to keep international and regional peace and promotes cooperation, transparency, and responsible action by and among states. It came into force on 24 December 2014. 113 states have ratified or acceded to the ATT, including six of the world's top 10 arms producers (France, Germany, Spain, China, the United Kingdom and Italy)

#### The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

The CTBT aims to ban nuclear weapons test explosions and any other nuclear explosions, for both civilian and military purposes in all environments

#### Treaty On The Non-Proliferation Of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The NPT's goal is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to reach the goal of worldwide nuclear disarmament

## IV. History of the Topic

Every year, more than \$100 billion worth of weapons are transferred to countries and other buyers all around the world. Most of these international transactions happened secretly until 1991 when there was an effort to ensure a measure of transparency about who is buying, who is selling, and what weapons are involved in the world's deadliest conflicts.

### Transparency after two World Wars

After the catastrophic impacts of the two World Wars, transparency and clarity in the creation, purchase, and sale of weapons were extremely necessary globally. The quantity of destruction and loss of life caused a protest for better transparency in the development and deployment of weapons. Following WW2, a series of international treaties were established through the Geneva Convention. An important part of these treaties is the importance they put on transparency in monitoring and reporting everything happening during a war, with the goal of keeping citizens fully informed and ensuring that ethical standards are kept, specifically through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

### Current issues with transparency

Nowadays the issues with weapon transparency are more prominent than ever. Multiple countries still are hiding significant information and new rules are being created that further block this clarity with weapons. For example, in December 2021 new rules on UK arms were created. They are called the Revised UK Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. These rules, while having good intentions (strategic export controls, an expansion in the scope of the military end-use control, and a tightening of controls on exports to China) can do more harm than good. One important change in the rules is that ministers now have more discretion in allowing arms sales. This means that they could approve exports of weapons even if there's a "theoretical" risk that the buyer might misuse the weapon. This allows weapons to be sold to countries with questionable human rights records and reduces transparency and accountability in the process. There has also been a decline in transparency and reporting regarding international arms transfers, particularly in the context of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which are having issues sharing relevant information on weapons because of the lack of resources in some countries to share it.

## Technology

Advancements in technology also helped enormously with clarity in this area. Satellite imagery, for example, made it difficult for nations to hide military activity or trade of weapons. The internet and digital communication have made all information about weaponry a lot more accessible to citizens, and have also helped spread it at a much greater speed. While these advancements in technology make information more accessible they are also raising new challenges, like the spreading of fake news or misinformation through artificial intelligence and news.

## V. Timeline of Events

### 1925: Geneva Protocol

The Geneva Protocol is a protocol that prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons in wars, which is essential to the start of regulation of what type of weapons are used. It was an essential start to weapon transparency, as it set an example for international agreements aimed at reducing the use of dangerous weapons.

### 1945: The United Nations is established

The establishment of the United Nations is a big step towards addressing and solving global security issues regarding weapon transparency, like arms controls and disarmament. UN arms control agreements were set, which required member states to submit regular reports on their weapons holdings, production, and exports.

### 1963: The Partial Test Ban Treaty

The Partial Test Ban Treaty was established, which prohibited all kinds of testing of detonations of nuclear weapons (except for those conducted underground). This treaty was established after realizing the dangers of nuclear weapons, not only environmentally but also how the radioactive fallout could affect citizens after the US and the Soviet Union had detonated their first hydrogen bombs.

### 1972 - Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I)

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks were negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union that were aimed at reducing the manufacture of strategic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons. In them, topics of transparency measures, such as data exchanges and on-site inspections are included. For example, they mandate the parties to

provide data exchanges on their number of strategic delivery vehicles, the vehicles' locations, and any changes in the data. Each party has access to short notice and planned inspections, so they can verify each others' data.

### 2010: The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty was established between Russia and the United States to enhance U.S. national security by placing limits on all Russian-deployed intercontinental-range nuclear weapons. This was essential, as it gave more transparency and information to both countries about each other's military arms. The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty played a crucial role in maintaining strategic stability and reducing the risk of nuclear conflict between these two major nuclear powers.

## VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

After the First World War, it was prohibited for Germany to use certain weapons such as submarines, but with the rise of the nazi party, this prohibition got ignored.

After the Second World War France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, The Netherlands, and West Germany created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

They recognized that in order to actually find a respectable solution, one would have to try to solve the problem from a different angle.

The ECSC would regulate the production of materials such as Steel and coal, materials that are crucial in the fabrication of weaponry, to make sure that no country could fabricate more weapons without anyone else noticing.

When other European countries started to join, it became a common effort to improve transparency and ultimately led to the formation of the European Union.

In 1968 the NPT (Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) was adopted by the United Nations.

The NPT aims to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, which implies that countries that form part of the treaty have to share information on their nuclear dismantling status

In 1991 the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was established which was marked as one of the fundamental mechanisms for promoting transparency and predictability in the conventional arms trade. Through UNROCA member states are asked on an annual basis to report their international weapon transfers in 7 categories (major convention arms, smaller conventional arms, WMD, etc.)

They also may report on further military information such as procurement through national production and/or military holdings.

Up until today, 175 Member states have reported to the UNROCA at least once.

In estimate, it is believed that the register captures around 90 percent of the volume of the global arms trade.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) came into force on the 24th of December 2014 and was the first legally binding treaty ever negotiated in the UN to establish a common ground on standards for the international transfer of conventional weapons.

The treaty fights illegal weapon transfer and promotes weapons to be transferred in a safer and more vigilant way

Furthermore, the UN lets its member states additionally voluntarily report on their weaponry and weapon transfers to showcase their 'domestic confidence'.

It is encouraged so that the trust between the countries and between government and citizens can grow.

## VII. Major Countries Involved

### USA

The US has a relatively long history of wanting to cooperate in being transparent with its weaponry.

In 1994, the US Department of Energy declassified the stockpile size and other information. In 2010, the Obama administration declassified the entire remaining history of US nuclear weapons stockpiles as well as warheads dismantled since 1994. These disclosures continued and even expanded to include the number of weapons awaiting dismantlement.

When the Trump administration took office, transparency didn't seem to be a priority anymore. But after Joe Biden won the presidential election, his administration in October 2021 restored stockpile transparency by declassifying the number as of September 2020.

Recently, the Biden administration decided to discontinue its own nuclear Transparency policy in 2022 which was most likely motivated by the invasion of Russia into Ukraine.

It should also be noted that The USA may have signed the ATT but hasn't ratified it yet, meaning not entirely putting it into effect.

### China

China is part of the Arms Trade Treaty which marks a massive step in Transparency in weaponry for the world, considering that China is part of the top 10 arms-producing countries.



Since then China has made adamant efforts in promoting the treaty and ensuring the transport of traded weapons is in accordance with the treaty.

This may be a great step in transparency but there's still a long way to go seeing as China keeps the number of nuclear warheads, the amount of its stockpiled fissile materials, or the production rate of new nuclear warheads a state secret.

There have been estimations in numbers that China neither confirms nor denies.

## United Kingdom

The UK is according to several sources one of the most transparent arms dealers in the world.

It signed and ratified the ATT as soon as it got adapted and regularly shares.

The UK is one of the 5 official nuclear powers and has declassified its number of warheads and Stockpile size to help create further trust between nations.

## Russia

Russia has not signed the ATT and made it clear that it will continue to use arms export in its own interest and does not see the appeal in the ATT's norms on the matter.

Furthermore, with the start of the destructive war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022, the Russian Federation is now limited in exports as a result of the sanctions imposed upon them because of the invasion of Ukraine.

## North Korea/ Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

North Korea has a long history of secrecy. Ever since the start of the Korean War, the country has cut itself off from the rest of the world and does not give out information on the military or anything related to the government and the country's people.

The DPRK has not formally revealed the number of warheads the country possesses but does have a habit of performing a number of tests.

While North Korea has signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, it belongs to the 8 countries that still need to complete their ratification procedures before the treaty can enter into force.

Furthermore, the DPRK withdrew from the NPT in 2003, which made it even harder to gain insight into the country's weaponry and military.

## **VIII. Questions a Resolution must answer**

- What steps will be taken to reduce the risk of accidental conflicts or misunderstandings related to weapons?
- What consequences or sanctions should there be for anyone who hides important information on weaponry and war?
- How does the resolution promote weapon transparency and trust among nations?
- What types of weapons should be covered by the measures taken?
- What mechanisms should be used to report information on weaponry and war?

## **IX. Possible Considerations for the Future**

### *Legally Binding Treaty*

Following the example of the ATT, a legally binding treaty that exclusively acts on transparency could help diffuse the tension between nations and help the worldwide nuclear disarmament the NPT aims to achieve.

By enforcing such the countries that signed and ratified this treaty would have to reveal obligation-specific figures, which would then only be revealed to the part-taking countries. This will create a balance of power and will make other countries not part of this treaty weaker seeing as the other countries have more insight now.

## **X. Conclusion**

Summarizing everything, right now there is a very big issue with weapon transparency. We can clearly see how information keeps being hidden which creates more conflict and infringes human rights as it causes more violence and war. Weapon transparency is essential because it can affect the lives of countless persons, and finding solutions to these issues is crucial. International treaties, such as the Geneva Convention, emphasize transparency in monitoring and reporting during conflicts through organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The United Nations also played a crucial role in arms control agreements, requiring member states to disclose critical information about their weaponry. Looking to the future, resolutions must address several questions, including how to prevent accidental conflicts and misunderstandings, establish consequences for hiding vital weapon-related information, and promote trust among nations. The meaning of transparency measures and reporting mechanisms should also be clearly defined. We hope for an interesting and fruitful debate!

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