

Northwest Model United Nations 2011

Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty – Explanatory Note

What is the Arms Trade Treaty, and what is the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty?

The Arms Trade Treaty is a proposed international treaty that would regulate the international trade in conventional arms. The treaty would regulate the trade through a series of conditional bans on trading if the particular transfer of weapons would lead to a specific adverse consequence. For example, one restriction highly likely to be a part of the Arms Trade Treaty could be paraphrased as, “any transfer of small arms and light weapons will be prohibited if that transfer would create or perpetuate armed violence in the recipient country.” The Arms Trade Treaty would not regulate either the personal ownership by individuals of conventional arms, nor would it regulate the domestic (within a state) trade.

The treaty is likely to consist of these specific components, each of which will have a section in the final document:

Principles, Goals and Objectives – This is essentially the preamble to the treaty. It establishes the reasons behind the treaty’s creation, and outlines what the treaty is hoped to achieve.

Scope – This section will address what items will be regulated, and what activities related to those items. The items list could include things like tanks, missile launchers, small arms, parts and components, grenades, and ammunition. The activities list could include imports, exports, brokering, and trans-shipment.

Parameters and Criteria – This is the category that creates conditions under which the scope would be banned. To use the example above, the section reading “if that transfer would create or perpetuate armed violence in the recipient country” is the parameter or criterion. Some other examples include the risk of human rights violations, the diversion of funds from development, the diversion of items to terrorist groups or the black market, and the destabilization of the recipient country or its region.

International Cooperation and Assistance – This section is based upon the idea that developing states, will have difficulty meeting their obligations under the treaty without support from other countries. This section will outline methods through which states can act together (Cooperation) to achieve the goals of the treaty, and through which states can help other states (Assistance) so that the states receiving help can comply with their obligations. Also, this section may include a section on Victims Assistance, which recognizes that the unregulated arms trade has created victims of armed violence and would establish responsibilities for countries to help those individual victims.

Implementation and Verification – This section outlines the specific responsibilities of states under the treaty (Implementation) and the ways in which the actions they take to meet these responsibilities can be documented and proven to other countries (Verification). Implementation will likely include things like licensing requirements, and obligations of states to cross-check licenses with the originating state. Verification will include reporting requirements and transparency mechanisms. This section might also include Review Conferences.

The Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty is the real negotiation conference that will draft the treaty. Scheduled to take place in July 2012, NWMUN 2011 will be simulating it this November, based on the pre-negotiation meetings, known as Preparatory Committees (“PrepComs”) that have already taken place and the stated position of over 100 countries.

Why is NWMUN 2011 simulating the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty?

NWMUN prides itself on being innovative and realistic. Simply put, simulating the General Assembly and other primary organs of the United Nations does not adequately capture the entire sphere of international diplomacy. Similar to other NWMUN innovations such as the simulation of the elections of Security Council members and the simulation of the hypothetical, post-membership reform Security Council, this year the conference chose to simulate a treaty discussion.

The Arms Trade Treaty was specifically chosen because the real negotiations will be held in July 2012, and thus the issue is very timely. If adopted, an Arms Trade Treaty will be the most expansive treaty ever to address conventional arms, and the negotiations provide delegates an excellent opportunity to learn more about the relationship between armaments, national security, human rights and international humanitarian law, the environment, and international development. Finally, NWMUN is able to provide an accurate simulation of this negotiation process due to the expertise held by members of our Advisory Board who work on and monitor the real negotiations.

How will the ATT be simulated at NWMUN 2011?

The ATT at NWMUN 2011 will include the discussion of the various components of the treaty, and the drafting of text for the treaty’s components, followed by voting on the segments, and finally adoption of the draft treaty as a whole.

Each component of the treaty will be addressed in order. To streamline the process of writing the treaty, we have adopted the real negotiations' system of classifying certain sections of the treaty (as listed above); we have also dedicated specific committee sessions to each one. Specifically, the sessions will be assigned as follows:

Friday, November 18 – Afternoon	Introductory Statements & Principles, Goals and Objectives
Friday, November 18 – Evening	Scope (Items and Activities)
Saturday, November 19 – Morning	Parameters and Criteria
Saturday, November 19 – Afternoon	International Cooperation and Assistance
Saturday, November 19 – Evening	Implementation and Verification
Sunday, November 20 – Morning	Consolidation of Draft Treaty, Final Edits, and Amendments
Sunday, November 20 – Afternoon	Final Amendments and Voting Bloc

These assignments are flexible; if the scope section(s) of the treaty have been drafted prior to the conclusion of the Friday evening session, the committee may move on to discussing parameters and criteria. This decision is up to the committee and based upon their progress in writing working papers that comprehensively address the section. Additionally, the Committee Staff will edit working papers continually. In other words, the committee may have moved from discussing Parameters and Criteria to discussing International Cooperation and Assistance, but the committee staff may still be handing back edits on working papers related to parameters as well, until those papers have been approved.

What Rules of Procedure will the ATT be using at NWMUN 2011?

The rules of procedure for the ATT will be the rules of procedure of the General Assembly at NWMUN, with the addition of an ATT-specific rules addendum. Delegates who are familiar with our rules will find that most rules are unchanged.

There are two key changes to the rules, however. The first is that the final document is a *treaty*, not a resolution. The treaty will be comprised of *treaty segments*, which prior to their approval during voting will be known as *draft treaty segments*. During voting bloc, each draft treaty segment will be considered in the same way a draft resolution would be, with amendments and other motions considered, followed by a vote on the segment's inclusion in the *draft treaty*, which will require a simple majority. Once all segments are voted upon, the draft treaty (which will contain all approved draft segments) will be voted on as a package. There will only be *one* final document allowed by the rules – the draft treaty.

The second major rules change has to do with the voting threshold. On the final vote on the draft treaty as a whole, a two-thirds majority will be needed to pass the final documents, which is the threshold required in the real world by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties in order for a conference to open a draft treaty for ratification.

Which countries will be represented on the ATT at NWMUN 2011?

NWMUN will be basing the number of delegates that are in the ATT at the 2011 conference on the overall registration for the conference. Our goal is to have between 60 and 70 delegate "spots" available for the ATT, with nearly all of them assigned to attending delegations. If the conference receives registration requests in excess of what we anticipated for this year, we will accommodate these requests by adding more countries to the ATT.

The specific countries that have been chosen can be seen on the NWMUN website on the [Country Matrix](#) page. These countries have been chosen to proportionally reflect the makeup of the real conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. The NWMUN Secretariat consulted with experts who have been observing the real ATT discussions at UN Headquarters in New York to find the correct proportion, to preserve realism and accuracy at our simulation of the ATT negotiations.

Where can I find more information on the ATT or my country's position?

All delegates to the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty should read the committee's Background Guide, which will be posted to the NWMUN website on the [Committees and Topics](#) page. They should also read the Delegate Preparation Guide, which will be posted to the [Delegate Preparation](#) page. Both documents will be posted by early October.

Numerous other resources are available online for delegates to use for research. Within the UN system, [Towards an Arms Trade Treaty](#) is an incredibly helpful source. [Control Arms](#) (a coalition of numerous NGOs) tracks the negotiations and explains the treaty and negotiation process. And for state-specific research, we recommend Oxfam International and Reaching Critical Will's joint project, www.armstreaty.org. Please also use the sources from the Background Guide and your country's UN Mission website, and most importantly, go beyond these sources and do independent research.

We look forward to seeing you this November!