



The Ploughshares Monitor

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Civil society presses for a strong Arms Trade Treaty

The participation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) has been, and will remain, a crucial factor in the development of a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Although the ATT must be a convention of states, civil society has been instrumental in promoting the urgency of the treaty and the key features needed to make it comprehensive and effective. The Arms Trade Treaty Steering Committee (ATTSC), of which Project Ploughshares is a member, has guided NGO advocacy of treaty content – most notably by drafting and promoting the “global principles” at the core of a strong convention. The Control Arms campaign has engaged hundreds of civil society groups worldwide in grassroots action, including the “Million Faces” petition for an ATT that was delivered to the UN Secretary-General in 2006.

In recent months NGO activity on the ATT has focused on the move toward treaty negotiations, the next phase in the UN process. As the manager of program funding provided to the ATTSC by the UK government (see *The Ploughshares Monitor*, Summer 2009, p. 6 or <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/monitor/monj09asidebar.pdf>), Project Ploughshares has worked with NGOs worldwide to implement national, regional, and global action on the ATT. The activities have included:

- **Lobbying during the July session of the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on the ATT at the UN in New York.** With logistics arranged by Oxfam, members of the ATTSC and Southern NGO activists spent the week meeting with diplomats and state officials to advocate the “vital components” of an ATT. The NGO group also provided displays and handout materials for OEWG delegates and organized three side events to explore key treaty features in some detail.
- **Regional workshops in Lebanon and Thailand.** Hosted by the Permanent Peace Movement (PPM) in Beirut, participants from 10 Middle East and North African countries met for two days in early July for briefings on the ATT process and to explore campaigning and advocacy with states in the region. A PPM spokesman presented the workshop results to the OEWG meeting in New York and to an ATT-related regional meeting of states in Jordan. Similarly, participants from eight Asia-Pacific countries met in Bangkok in late September at a workshop hosted by Non-Violence International South East Asia (NISEA). In October, a NISEA spokesman made presentations to a regional meeting of states in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and to the UN First Committee sessions in New York.

- **Events, exhibitions, and outreach in India.** The Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI) organized several events in New Delhi to bring more exposure to the ATT and press India to support the treaty. CAFI-hosted activities included an August briefing session for parliamentarians and two events in September – a two-day roundtable with government officials, military industry representatives, lawyers, and other experts; and an Inter-Faith Meeting of religious leaders. During September CAFI also mounted a photographic exhibition, “A Farewell to Arms,” featuring 14 renowned Indian photographers such as Shri Raghu Rai. Other popular campaigning activities in India include an on-line petition, work with celebrities, and the distribution of mobilization materials to campaign volunteers.
- **Lobbying at the UN First Committee in New York in October.** With logistics arranged by the International Action Network on Small Arms, more than 40 NGO representatives participated in a staggered lobbying effort throughout October to influence the drafting of, and support for, the ATT resolution approved overwhelmingly on October 30. Although arguably more intense, the NGO activities followed previous First Committee efforts. In addition to regular discussions with diplomats in the UN corridors and at ad hoc meetings, the NGOs distributed recent materials, hosted five side events on ATT topics, and mounted a display depicting breaches of the ATT global principles.