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Why India abstained on Arms Trade Treaty



Picture of Knotted gun sculpture outside UN headquarters in New York.

Credit: Wikimedia

*India's explanation of vote by **Ambassador Sujata Mehta**, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference of Disarmament in Geneva, during the UNGA Session on the Arms Trade Treaty*

Mr. President,

As we had stated in the concluding plenary of the Final Conference on an ATT on 28 March, the draft treaty text sought to be adopted through this resolution falls short of our expectations and a number of other key stakeholders in producing a text that is clear, balanced and implementable and able to attract universal adherence.

From the beginning of the ATT process, India has maintained that such a treaty should make a real impact on illicit trafficking in conventional arms and their illicit use especially by terrorists and other unauthorised and unlawful non-state actors. India has also stressed consistently that the ATT should ensure a balance of obligations between exporting and importing states. However, the draft treaty that is annexed to the resolution is weak on terrorism and non-state actors and these concerns find no mention in the specific prohibitions of the Treaty. Further, India cannot accept that the Treaty be used as an instrument in the hands of exporting states to take unilateral force majeure measures against importing states parties without consequences. The relevant provisions in the final text do not meet our requirements.

India has been an active participant in the ATT negotiations. Underlying our participation in these extended negotiations was the principle that member states have a legitimate right to self-defence and our belief that there is no conflict between the pursuit of national security objectives and the aspiration that the Arms Trade Treaty be strong, balanced and effective. This is consistent with the strong and effective national export controls that India already has in place with respect to export of defence items.

My Government will undertake a full and thorough assessment of the ATT from the perspective of our defence, security and foreign policy interests. At this stage we are not in a position to endorse the text contained as annexure to document A/67/L.58. Therefore, India has abstained on the resolution. I would request that this statement be reflected in full in the records of this Session.

Keywords: [Sujata Mehta](#), [Arms Trade Treaty](#), [UNGA](#), [India's Permanent Representative to UN](#), [gun control](#)