



# DEVELOPING EVALUATIVE METRICS FOR ATT REPORTING

**AUGUST 2025**

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# The Stimson Center's Arms Trade Treaty-Baseline Assessment Project (ATT-BAP)

aims to assist States in understanding the obligations of the ATT and to promote effective implementation. ATT-BAP supports efforts to assist States in implementing the treaty and to ensure that reporting on the ATT is comprehensive and robust. ATT-BAP has developed tools to help provide a baseline for assessing State progress in implementing the ATT and to enable measurement of the treaty's impact and long-term effectiveness. These tools are also utilized for identifying State capacity and resource needs, including the identification of critical gaps and available resources to implement the ATT. The tools include a Ratification Checklist, Implementation Checklist and Assistance Assessment, the ATT-BAP Baseline Assessment Survey, guidance for completing initial and annual reports, and numerous analytical reports.

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This brief was made possible through the generous support of the Governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Switzerland. Stimson also extends its gratitude to the consulted parties and peer reviewers for their valuable contributions and insights.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) establishes common international criteria to govern the international trade of conventional arms. At the forefront of the ATT's object and purpose is the enhancement of transparency over international arms transfers and national control systems. The ATT contains legally binding requirements to foster accountability, oversight, and confidence-building mechanisms. ATT reporting has the potential to provide valuable information on national arms transfer control systems, enhance visibility into regional and global arms flows, assist in detecting potentially destabilizing weapons accumulations, promote responsibility in the international arms trade, and, ultimately, contribute to international and regional peace, security, and stability.

### Article 1 Object and Purpose

The object of this Treaty is to:

- ▶ Establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms;
- ▶ Prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion;

for the purpose of:

- ▶ Contributing to international and regional peace, security and stability;
- ▶ Reducing human suffering;
- ▶ **Promoting cooperation, transparency and responsible action by States Parties in the international trade in conventional arms, thereby building confidence among States Parties.**

Under ATT Article 13, States Parties are legally required to submit two reports to the ATT Secretariat. The first is an initial report on measures undertaken to implement the ATT, due within the first year of the ATT's entry into force for that State Party. State Parties must also report to the Secretariat on any new measures undertaken to implement the treaty, when appropriate. The second required ATT reporting mechanism is an annual report, to be submitted to the ATT Secretariat by 31 May each year, on actual or authorized arms imports and exports that occurred during the previous calendar year.

Initial reports contain information about States Parties' national control systems and how States regulate the international transfer of conventional arms – providing an invaluable mechanism to analyze the ways in which States have enhanced their national systems and how national systems have evolved over time. Annual reports provide a useful resource to evaluate transparency in actual transfers of arms, both in terms of use as periodic indicators of treaty compliance and as a means to assess available information around the international arms trade today compared with before the ATT's entry into force.

## ATT Initial Report

**Article 13(1):** Each State Party shall, within the first year after entry into force of this Treaty for that State Party, in accordance with Article 22, provide an initial report to the Secretariat of measures undertaken in order to implement this Treaty, including national laws, national control lists and other regulations and administrative measures. Each State Party shall report to the Secretariat on any new measures undertaken in order to implement this Treaty, when appropriate. Reports shall be made available, and distributed to States Parties by the Secretariat.

## ATT Annual Report

**Article 13(3):** Each State Party shall submit annually to the Secretariat by 31 May a report for the preceding calendar year concerning authorized or actual exports and imports of conventional arms covered under Article 2 (1). Reports shall be made available, and distributed to States Parties by the Secretariat. The report submitted to the Secretariat may contain the same information submitted by the State Party to relevant United Nations frameworks, including the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Reports may exclude commercially sensitive or national security information.

Since the ATT's entry into force in 2014, these reports have produced a body of data that can be used to evaluate the impact and quality of ATT reporting and determine whether the ATT has lived up to its object and purpose. In the treaty's first decade, examination of this data has largely been the remit of civil society organizations. From the ATT Baseline Assessment Project to the ATT Monitor, civil society has been the source for comprehensive data and analysis on reporting compliance, challenges, State interpretation of obligations, and opportunities for stronger implementation.<sup>1</sup> However, since States Parties have the opportunity to provide initial and annual reports that are only available to other States Parties and the ATT Secretariat, the information necessary to provide a full analysis of ATT reporting on global arms transfers and processes cannot be ascertained from publicly available data and information alone.<sup>2</sup>

The Secretariat has, year after year, provided top-line, numerical statistics for reporting compliance and has produced multiple resources to support States in their ATT reporting.<sup>3</sup> The Working Group on Transparency and Reporting (WTGR) has tried to identify, through topical discussions and its annual workplan, the ways in which ATT reporting is understood by States and potential strategies to improve compliance.<sup>4</sup> On the whole, however, there are no formal treaty processes to comprehensively assess the first decade of ATT reporting.

<sup>1</sup> For more, see <https://www.stimson.org/project/att-bap/> and <https://attmonitor.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> Public data on ATT initial and annual reporting is available on the ATT Secretariat website. See ATT Secretariat, "Annual Reports." <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/annual-reports.html?templateId=209826>, and ATT Secretariat, "Initial Reports." <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/initial-reports.html?templateId=209839#>.

<sup>3</sup> For the Secretariat's reporting resources, see the 'Reporting Requirements' webpage on the ATT Secretariat website. ATT Secretariat, "Reporting Requirements." <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/reporting.html>.

<sup>4</sup> For work and documents produced by the WTGR, see the 'Events' section of the ATT Secretariat website. ATT Secretariat, "Events." <https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/>.

Due to these outstanding gaps, the true impact of ATT reporting is unknown. Has ATT reporting in practice lived up to the treaty's objectives and contributed to confidence-building and transparency? Have State governments utilized the required reviews of national control systems to improve their practices and fulfill the treaty's objectives? Current trends indicate that reporting rates are in decline, momentum for reporting is slowing, and, for many States Parties, other priorities have eclipsed their reporting obligations. A decade past the ATT's inception, the impact and quality of ATT reporting – and ultimately, whether the ATT has lived up to its object and purpose – needs to be comprehensively evaluated.

The Stimson Center's 2024 report "The Arms Trade Treaty at 10: A Review of Successes and Shortcomings of a Decade of Global Regulation of the International Arms Trade," called for the development of a methodology to analyze the impact of ATT reporting and transparency measures, to examine how reporting obligations have been implemented, and to both evaluate challenges faced by States in fulfilling their reporting obligations and identify potential opportunities to strengthen ATT reporting.<sup>5</sup>

Moving into the treaty's second decade, it is even more imperative to develop an official treaty process for assessing the first ten years of reporting to inform recommendations and practical steps to ensure the ATT remains relevant and States continue to submit their initial and annual reports. Such a process could consist of yearly public assessments of ATT reporting as well as formal discussions and agenda items as part of the programme of work for the WGTR. In whatever form they take, the formal ATT process needs to identify ways to measure whether the ATT is achieving its transparency goals and objectives. Furthermore, if an evaluation of reporting metrics are undertaken by the formal treaty process, the requisite human, financial, and technical resources and capacity must also be provided on a regular basis.

This brief seeks to aid the development of an official evaluative process by proposing a series of key interrogative metrics that could be utilized to provide important insights into the impact of ATT reporting. Given the Stimson Center's position as a civil society organization (and thus limited by the information that is publicly available), this report only identifies the metrics that need to be evaluated and does not undertake the actual analysis.

## METHODOLOGY

Stimson's Arms Trade Treaty Baseline Assessment Project (ATT-BAP) has spent the last decade focusing on ATT reporting and identifying the information required to best understand the ATT's transparency impact. The development of these evaluative metrics originates from expertise gained over the course of that work, from review and analysis of existing ATT reporting data, and from consultations with ATT States Parties, the ATT Secretariat, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders. The list below only identifies the metrics that need to be evaluated and does not undertake the actual analysis.

<sup>5</sup> Rachel Stohl, "The Arms Trade Treaty at 10: A Review of Successes and Shortcomings of a Decade of Global Regulation of the International Arms Trade." *The Stimson Center*, 20 August 2024, pp. 29. <https://www.stimson.org/2024/the-arms-trade-treaty-at-10/>.

## EVALUATIVE METRICS

### COMPLIANCE

- A.** What percentage of States Parties due to submit an initial report have done so?
- B.** To what extent have States Parties that undertook new measures to implement the ATT reported on these measures to the Secretariat since submitting their first initial reports (e.g., by submitting updated initial reports)?
- C.** What percentage of States Parties due to submit an annual report have submitted at least one, most, or all of their required annual reports?
- D.** What percentage of initial and annual reports have been submitted on time?
- E.** What is the annual reporting compliance rate of States Parties following the submission of their first annual report? Have they continued to submit their required annual reports? If so, what is the percentage for 1, 2, 3, etc. years of reporting following their first report?
- F.** To what extent have initial and annual reporting compliance rates changed over time, both with respect to overall compliance and on-time compliance?
- G.** What reporting challenges have been identified that have impacted States' ability to submit their initial and annual reports?

## TRANSPARENCY

- A.** What percentage of initial and annual reports are publicly available?
- B.** What percentage of States Parties with annual reporting experience have shifted from public to private annual reporting, or vice versa?
- C.** How many States Parties have changed the status of their previously submitted initial or annual reports from public to private, or vice versa? And why did States change whether their reports are public or private?
- D.** What percentage of annual reports indicate the exclusion of commercially sensitive or national security information, and have States Parties provided information regarding the data excluded from their reports?
- E.** To what extent is the information provided in initial and annual reports sufficiently detailed and disaggregated so as to provide analytically useful insights into States Parties' control systems and arms exports and imports?
- F.** To what extent has the level of transparency provided by initial and annual reports changed over time, including with respect to their public availability, amount of information excluded, and level of detail and disaggregation?

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER REPORTING MECHANISMS

- A.** To what extent have initial and annual reports provided information beyond that which would otherwise be available through existing national, regional, or international reporting mechanisms?
- B.** How many States Parties have consistently reported on their national control systems or arms exports and imports in their ATT reports despite no experience or practice of reporting under other existing national, regional, or international reporting mechanisms?
- C.** To what extent has ATT reporting contributed to increased rates of reporting under existing national, regional, or international reporting mechanisms, or otherwise helped facilitate such additional reporting efforts?



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Since its inception, the Stimson Center's Arms Trade Treaty Baseline Assessment Project has been generously funded by the Governments of Australia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, as well as UNSCAR (the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation). In addition, the project has engaged in partnerships with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and its regional centers, regional organizations (including CARICOM and the European Union), and civil society organizations, including the Center for Armed Violence Reduction (CAVR), Control Arms, and the ATT Monitor.

For more information, visit the Arms Trade Treaty Baseline Assessment Project at <https://www.stimson.org/project/att-bap/>.

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