



**COUNCIL OF
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Council authorises member states to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty

On 3rd March, the Council adopted a decision authorising EU member states to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

In adopting this decision authorising member states to ratify the Treaty in the interests of the European Union, the Council is completing the EU's internal procedures that received the consent of the European Parliament on 5 February 2014. Because the Arms Trade Treaty covers some areas of EU exclusive competence and because the EU itself cannot be a party to the Treaty (which is open to States only), EU member states had to be authorised first by an EU decision before ratifying the Treaty.

The adoption of the Council decision now paves the way for the first EU member states in a position to do so to deposit their ratification instruments in New York. This will bring a significant contribution towards entry into force of the Treaty. The Treaty was adopted by the UN General Assembly in April 2013 and will enter into force upon the 50th ratification.

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission said *"This decision will enable the first batch of national ratifications in support of the early entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty. The EU's longstanding support to the Treaty will continue after its entry into force to promote its effective implementation so that it can actually make a tangible difference towards more responsible arms transfers"*.

P R E S S

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Further to the Treaty's entry into force, its effective implementation and desirable universalisation will be extremely important. To contribute to addressing those challenges, the EU adopted in December 2013 under Council Decision 2013/768/CFSP an ambitious and tangible implementation support programme for third countries. This programme will assist a number of third countries in strengthening their arms transfer systems in line with the requirements of the Treaty. There will also be a consistent effort to reach out to countries not yet party to the Treaty.
