



control arms



December 7, 2015

The Honourable Stéphane Dion, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Email: stephane.dion@parl.gc.ca

Re: Canada's accession to the Arms Trade Treaty

Dear Minister Dion:

Congratulations on your re-election to the House of Commons and on your appointment as Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs. We wish you much success in the critical portfolio now in your charge. Please be assured that civil society organizations across the country and beyond are ready to work with your department in the pursuit of a foreign policy that upholds Canada's international humanitarian law and human rights obligations and once again demonstrates leadership within the international community.

We are writing today to encourage the Canadian government to seize the opportunity to join one of the most consequential arms control agreements of this generation—the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

While most nations have signed and many ratified the ATT, Canada has done neither. Canada is the only country in North America, the only member of the G7 group of industrialized nations, and the only one of the 28 members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization that has NOT joined this treaty. Consequently, Canada was absent from the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty hosted by the Government of Mexico last August, as well as from the various preparatory conferences.

We were therefore greatly encouraged to hear Justin Trudeau publicly pledge during the federal election campaign that Canada would join the ATT should he become Prime Minister. This announcement was received with wide-ranging support from foreign governments as well as civil society organizations at home and abroad.

The Prime Minister's election pledge now requires concrete follow-up for Canada to officially accede to the treaty. You are uniquely positioned to move this process forward by coordinating the various interdepartmental regulatory and political processes that will result in full and prompt treaty accession. We are encouraged to see that ATT accession has been made a priority for your mandate and hope this may facilitate a more rapid accession process.

The unregulated and irresponsible trade in conventional weapons fuels armed conflict, supports human rights violations and sustains autocratic regimes. The international community has finally recognized that the costs in human suffering from lax regulation of the often unscrupulous multi-billion-dollar arms trade demand a concerted, multilateral effort. The Arms

Trade Treaty is the first global agreement to regulate the trade in conventional arms in order to prevent human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

Time is of the essence. While you read this, the rights and lives of civilians around the world are threatened by the products of irresponsible arms dealings.

Members of the Control Arms Coalition from Canada and abroad made substantial contributions to the process that led to the First ATT Conference of States Parties. Should your department wish to seek civil society input, individuals and organizations are willing and eager to share their insights and to support efforts toward treaty accession and, subsequently, toward effective treaty implementation.

The second Conference of States Parties to the ATT will be held in the summer of 2016 in Geneva. We encourage Canada to take the necessary steps for treaty accession by this time so it can attend the conference as a state party. Its presence would be most definitely welcomed by the international community. We look forward to liaising with the Canadian delegation at the conference.

Minister Dion, the ultimate goal of the ATT is to reduce human suffering and save lives. The alignment of this objective with the values that have long informed Canadian foreign policy is clear.

We heartily welcome the Prime Minister's announcement that Canada will join the Arms Trade Treaty. Please know that we fully support Canada's accession to the treaty and are eager to contribute to efforts related to its effective implementation.

We would be glad to discuss these issues further with officials in your department.

Best regards,

Cesar Jaramillo, Executive Director, Project Ploughshares
Alex Neve, Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada
Julie Delahanty, Executive Director, Oxfam-Canada
Denise Byrnes, Directrice générale, Oxfam-Québec
Victor Amisi, Executive Director, Vision GRAM-International
Anna Macdonald, Director, Control Arms Secretariat

Endorsed by:

Mines Action Canada
Les Artistes pour la Paix
Rideau Institute
Science for Peace
World Federalist Movement – Canada
Canadian Council for International Cooperation

c.c.: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Rona Ambrose, MP, Interim Leader of the Official Opposition
The Honourable Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
Elizabeth May, MP, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Rhéal Fortin, Acting Leader of the Bloc Québécois