

## IV. Transparency in arms transfers

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Official and publicly accessible data on arms transfers—both exports and imports—is important for assessing states' policies on arms exports, arms procurement and defence. Some 170 states have published information on their arms exports and imports in the form of national reports on arms exports or through their participation in regional or international reporting mechanisms at some point in the past 25 years (although in many cases the information covers only one or a few years).<sup>1</sup> As of 31 December 2018, 36 states had published at least one national report on arms exports since 1990.<sup>2</sup> As in 2015–17, no state produced a national report on arms exports in 2018 that had not done so previously, and there were no significant developments in either the types of data included or the level of detail provided.<sup>3</sup> A number of regional reporting instruments have been mandated or established (most notably in West Africa, the Americas and the European Union) since the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup> No significant developments relating to these instruments took place in 2018. The main international reporting mechanisms in the field of international arms transfers are the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) reporting instrument. This section analyses the current status of these two instruments.

### **The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms**

UNROCA was established in 1991 and reporting started in 1993 (for transfers in 1992). It aims to build confidence between states and 'to prevent the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms'.<sup>5</sup> Each year, all UN member states are 'requested' to report, on a voluntary basis, information on their exports and imports in the previous year of certain types of weapon, specifically those that are deemed to be 'the most lethal' or 'indispensable for

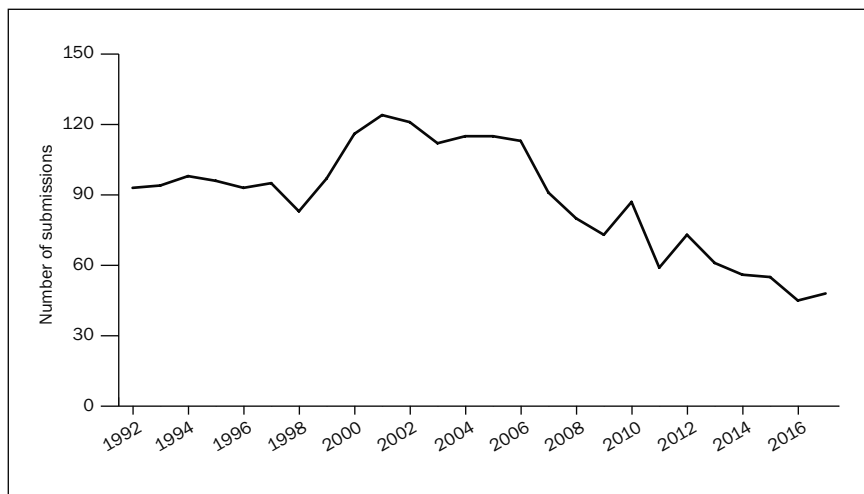
<sup>1</sup> This section covers only public reporting instruments in the field of arms transfers. Confidential exchanges of information, such as those that occur within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Wassenaar Arrangement, are not addressed.

<sup>2</sup> SIPRI collects all published national reports on arms transfers and makes them available in its National Reports Database.

<sup>3</sup> Some states that do not publish a national report on their arms exports release data on the overall financial value of their arms exports. These states include India, Israel, Pakistan and Russia.

<sup>4</sup> The main regional reporting instruments are: (a) the instrument created under the 2006 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials; (b) instruments created by the Organization of American States; and (c) the European Union annual report. For further detail on these regional reporting instruments see Bromley, M. and Wezeman, S., 'Transparency in arms transfers', *SIPRI Yearbook 2016*, pp. 595–603.

<sup>5</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 46/36L, 6 Dec. 1991.



**Figure 5.2.** Number of submissions to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), 1992–2017

*Note:* Years refer to the year covered by the reports, not the year of their submission. Only submissions from states are included.

*Sources:* UNROCA online databases (old and new versions); and reports on UNROCA by the UN Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly, various years.

offensive operations'.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, states are invited to provide additional background information on holdings of weapons and procurement from national production. Since 2003, states have also been invited to provide background information on exports and imports of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

Reports are made publicly available on the website of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to identify which states have submitted reports to UNROCA due to the fact that states' submissions have been available in three different locations on the UNODA website: the old online database, which was still accessible in late 2018, the new online database and the UN Secretary-General's annual reports on states' submissions to UNROCA.<sup>7</sup>

Reporting levels have decreased since the early to mid 2000s when over 100 states reported annually, compared with 45 for 2016 and 48 for 2017 (see

<sup>6</sup> These weapons are battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, and missiles and missile launchers. The reports are made publicly available at the website of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

<sup>7</sup> The new version of the online database is available at the UNROCA website. See also United Nations, General Assembly, 'United Nations Register of Conventional Arms: Report of the Secretary-General', A/73/185, 18 July 2018.

**Table 5.9.** Number of submissions to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) by region, 2013–17

The column for each year refers to the year covered by the reports, not the year of their submission. Figures in brackets in the left-most column are the total UN members per region. Other figures in brackets are the percentages per region of UN members that have reported. Percentages above 10 per cent have been rounded to the nearest whole number; those below 10 per cent to 1 decimal place.

Regions <sup>a</sup>	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Africa (54)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.7%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)
Americas (35)	9 (26%)	8 (23%)	8 (23%)	5 (14%)	4 (11%)
Asia (28)	7 (25%)	8 (29%)	7 (25%)	5 (18%)	5 (18%)
Europe (47)	41 (87%)	37 (79%)	32 (68%)	32 (68%)	36 (77%)
Middle East (15)	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	1 (6.7%)	2 (13%)	1 (6.7%)
Oceania (14)	1 (7.1%)	1 (7.1%)	5 (36%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.1%)
<b>Total (193)</b>	<b>62 (32%)</b>	<b>56 (29%)</b>	<b>55 (28%)</b>	<b>45 (23%)</b>	<b>48 (25%)</b>

<sup>a</sup> For further detail on SIPRI's regional coverage see the Arms Transfers Database web page of the SIPRI website.

*Note:* Only submissions from states are included.

*Sources:* UNROCA online databases (old and new versions); and reports on UNROCA by the UN Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly, various years.

figure 5.2).<sup>8</sup> As in most years since 1993, the level of reporting by states in Africa and the Middle East was very low for 2017. Only one of the 54 states in Africa and one of the 15 states in the Middle East submitted a report for 2017. There was a downward trend in reporting in all other regions in the five-year period 2013–17 (see table 5.9).

Most of the large exporters of major weapons, as identified by SIPRI (see section I), reported for 2017—only one of the top 10 exporters in 2017 (Israel) did not submit a report to UNROCA for 2017. However, only three of the top 10 importers in 2017 submitted reports: India, China and Australia.<sup>9</sup>

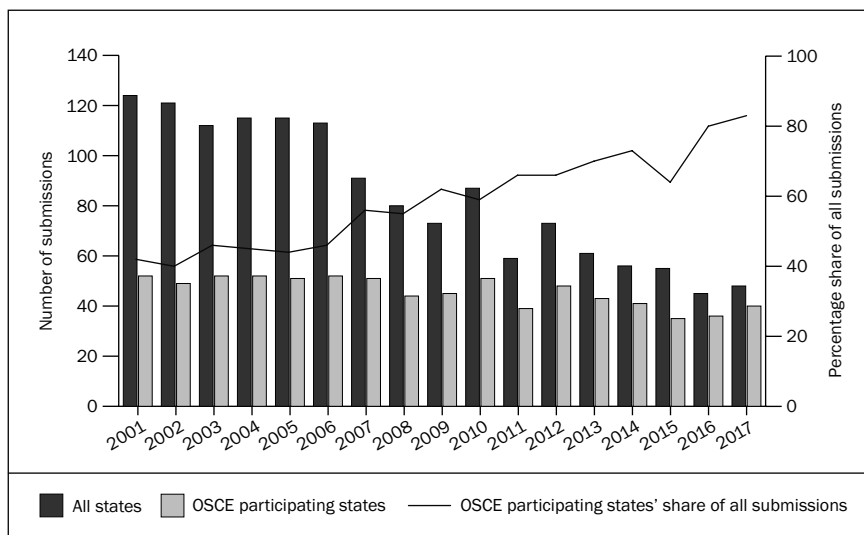
### *OSCE states and UNROCA reporting*

The UN General Assembly resolution that established UNROCA called on states to ‘cooperate at a regional and subregional level... with a view to enhancing and coordinating international efforts aimed at increased openness and transparency in armaments’.<sup>10</sup> The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has been particularly active in raising the profile of UNROCA and seeking to increase levels of participation among OSCE participating states. For example, since 1997, OSCE participating

<sup>8</sup> Some states have reported late in previous years and it is likely that the final numbers will be higher than those stated in this section as late reports for transfers in 2017 are submitted.

<sup>9</sup> For more detail on reporting trends and a qualitative analysis of the content of the reports see Wezeman, S. T., ‘Reporting to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms for 2017’, SIPRI Background Paper, June 2019.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, Resolution 46/36L, 6 Dec. 1991.



**Figure 5.3.** Number of submissions to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA), 2001–17

OSCE = Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

*Notes:* Data is as of 1 Apr. 2019. Some states have reported late in previous years and it is likely that the final numbers will be higher than those stated in this figure as late reports for transfers in 2017 are submitted. The figure covers the period 2001–17 because 2001 was the peak year for UNROCA submissions. Years refer to the year covered by the reports, not the year of their submission. Only submissions from states are included.

*Sources:* UNROCA online databases (old and new versions); and reports on UNROCA by the UN Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly, various years.

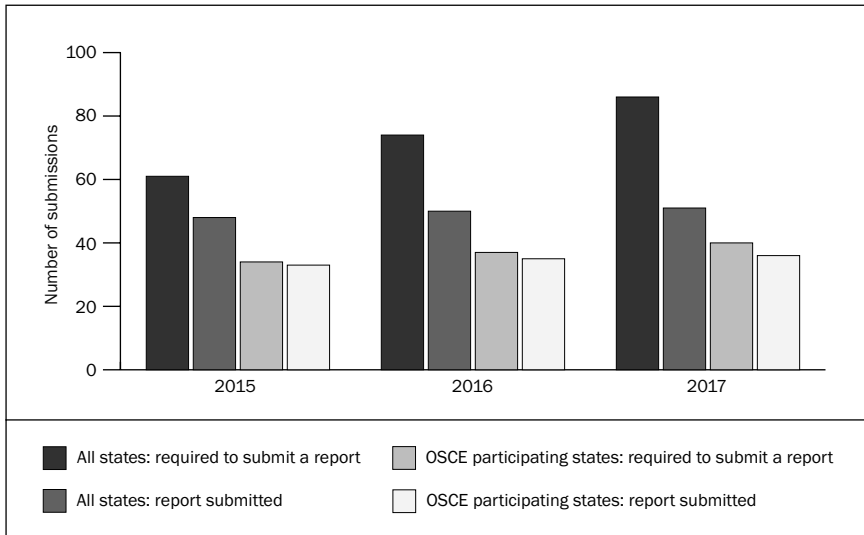
states have agreed to share their annual submissions to UNROCA with each other and to do so no later than 30 June each year.<sup>11</sup> In recent years, OSCE participating states' submissions have made up a growing proportion of the reports to UNROCA. The number of submissions from OSCE participating states fell from 52 for 2001 to 40 for 2017 but their share of all reports rose from 42 per cent to 83 per cent (see figure 5.3).

In 2016, OSCE participating states agreed to make their exchanges on UNROCA publicly available.<sup>12</sup> The OSCE has operationalized this decision by simply posting the OSCE participating states' submissions in full on the OSCE website.<sup>13</sup> Thirty-six of the 57 OSCE participating states made their UNROCA submissions for 2016 available via the OSCE exchange and 38 did so for 2017. However, not all of these reports are available on the UNODA

<sup>11</sup> OSCE, 'Decision no. 13/97: Further transparency in arms transfers', FSC.DEC/13/97, 16 July 1997.

<sup>12</sup> OSCE, 'Decision no. 4/16: Enabling the publication of information exchanges in the field of small arms and light weapons, conventional arms transfers and anti-personnel mines', FSC.DEC/4/16/Corr.1, 21 Sep. 2016.

<sup>13</sup> OSCE, Information Exchange on Conventional Arms Transfer.



**Figure 5.4.** Number of Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) states parties and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) participating states that have submitted annual reports, 2015–17

*Note:* Years refer to the year covered by the reports, not the year of their submission.

*Source:* ATT Secretariat, ATT Annual Reports Database, ‘Status as of 9 Jan. 2019’, accessed 21 Jan. 2019.

website. Moreover, not all of the reports by OSCE participating states that are available on the UNODA website are available on the OSCE website. As of January 2019, 49 reports by OSCE participating states on arms transfers in 2017 were available via the OSCE and UNODA websites in combination, but only 29 of these were available from both sources. Nine were available only on the OSCE website while 11 were available only on the UNODA website.

### The Arms Trade Treaty report on arms transfers

Article 13 of the ATT obliges each state party to provide the ATT Secretariat with an annual report on arms exports and imports. Over the three years for which reports were due (2015–17), the number of states that are obliged to submit annual reports has grown as the number of states parties has increased (see figure 5.4). However, the number of reports submitted has remained almost the same for each of the three years. As a result, the proportion of states that submitted the required report on arms transfers fell from 79 per cent for

2015 to 59 per cent for 2017.<sup>14</sup> As with UNROCA, OSCE participating states that are ATT states parties are far more likely to submit a report to the ATT Secretariat than other states. For 2017, 89 per cent of OSCE participating states that were required to submit an annual report on arms transfers to the ATT reporting mechanisms did so, compared with 29 per cent of non-OSCE participating states.

<sup>14</sup> ATT Secretariat, ATT Annual Reports Database, 'Status as of 9 Jan. 2019', accessed 21 Jan. 2019. For further detail on the issues connected to states' submissions of annual reports under the ATT see chapter 10, section I, in this volume.