

Differences between the ‘United Nations Programme of Action’ and the ‘United Nations Arms Trade Treaty’

The UN Programme of Action (PoA) and the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) are arms control processes that take place within the framework of the United Nations. They are developed and advanced by the 193 UN Member States, however elements of the two processes and what they aim to achieve are very different. This document outlines and clarifies some of the major differences between the PoA and the UN ATT.

	PoA	ATT
What is it?	<i>The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects</i> (UN Small Arms Process) was adopted by consensus at the UN General Assembly after negotiations at the 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms. It is a non-legally binding agreement covering aspects of processes, regulations and assessment of measures to address illicit trade of SALW	The ATT does not yet exist; however negotiations to develop a global, legally binding agreement are underway at the UN and are expected to conclude in July 2012. A strong and effective global ATT would strengthen regulation of international arms transfers of conventional weapons, helping to reduce serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and prevent undermining of socio-economic development being
Types of weapons	Small arms & light weapons and their ammunition	A comprehensive ATT would cover all conventional arms, including SALW and possibly ammunition
Activities covered	Recommendations for manufacture, marking, record-keeping, tracing, stockpile management, surplus identification and disposal, public awareness, DDR and children, international transfers of SALW	All international arms transfers of conventional weapons including exports, imports and other transfers between countries
Commitment	Politically binding. UN Member States have affirmed their ‘will’ to implement the PoA but on a voluntary basis only	Will be a legally binding treaty i.e. provisions of the ATT will become international law
Implementation	Each State can implement the PoA as it wishes, usually guided by National Commissions in line with National Action Plans	After the treaty text is agreed, states that ratify the ATT will need to modify national arms transfer legislation and procedures to comply with its provisions
Monitoring	Voluntary biennial reports on implementation	Annual reporting obligations should be included in the treaty. The establishment of an Implementation Support Unit will support and coordinate state reporting
Enforcement	None. Implementation is on a voluntary basis	National legislation meeting a minimum standard would enforce the treaty
Next Steps	A PoA Review Conference will take place in August 2012. States will report on their progress implementing the PoA since the last PoA Biennial Meeting of States in 2010. There will also be a PoA Preparatory Committee in March 2012 to prepare for the August Review Conference	UN member states will aim to draft treaty text at the ATT Negotiating Conference, July 2012. Member states will then decide to sign and ratify the ATT. Ratification can take years and usually has to pass through national parliament. There will be an ATT PrepCom in February 2012 to prepare for the ATT negotiating conference
IANSA calls for..	Continued support for the PoA from States; effective implementation supported by international assistance; strengthened role for CSOs at the national and regional levels; comprehensive and regular reporting ; and the strengthening of National Commissions	The inclusion of SALW and its ammunition in the type of weapons (scope) the ATT covers; criterion that would prevent a transfer that would perpetuate a pattern of, or facilitate high levels of homicides with firearms ; the inclusion of gender based violence ; and support for international cooperation

Why are these processes important for IANSA? The focus of the IANSA network is to reduce gun violence and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Both the PoA and the ATT have the capacity to achieve these aims. Therefore it is of great importance that both the PoA and ATT are as strong and effective as they can be. The IANSA network has played an important role in both processes to date, and with the ATT negotiating conference and the PoA Review Conference both taking place in 2012 it is a crucial time for IANSA to make its voice heard and ensure both meetings are successful in supporting rather than supplanting each other.