Universalization and Effective Implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in Africa

Lessons learned from the 2024 Monrovia Workshop

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Acknowledgements

About UNIDIR

UNIDIR is a voluntarily funded, autonomous institute within the United Nations. One of the few policy institutes worldwide focusing on disarmament, UNIDIR generates knowledge and promotes dialogue and action on disarmament and security. Based in Geneva, UNIDIR assists the international community to develop the practical, innovative ideas needed to find solutions to critical security problems.

Notes

An initial lessons learned document was prepared in October 2024 to fulfil the requirements of the ATT VTF project ATT.VTF.G2023.002LBR. This report is an extended version of the lessons learned document.

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Abbreviations

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
CSO	Civil society organization
CSP	Conference of States Parties
ECOWAS	Community of West African States
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
LiNCA	Liberia National Commission on Arms
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RECSA	Regional Centre on Small Arms
SADC	Southern African Development Commun
VTF	Voluntary Trust Fund

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Introduction

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was adopted in 2013 with the intention of enhancing the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms, preventing their diversion to unauthorized end users and for unauthorized end uses, and promoting peace, security and stability. The universalization of the treaty – that is, its adoption by the largest possible number of states – and its effective implementation by its parties can help to reduce human suffering, foster a transparent and responsible international arms trade, and build trust among states.

The 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the ATT in 2024 marked a pivotal moment for assessing global and regional efforts in ATT universalization and implementation. African States, in particular West African states, played a leading role in the successful negotiation of the ATT and its early entry into force in December 2014. With this in mind, the Liberia National Commission on Arms (LiNCA) and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) decided to organize the Monrovia Workshop to Support Universalization and Effective Implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty to provide the first pan-African platform to take stock of and share information on how African states have overcome challenges to becoming states parties to the ATT and in implementing the treaty's provisions (see Box 1). With sponsorship from the ATT Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF), LiNCA and UNIDIR convened the four-day Monrovia Workshop on 18–21 March 2024. The workshop brought together nominated representatives from the national governments of 19 African states, as well as representatives from the ATT Secretariat, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).[1]

This report summarizes the key findings from the pre-workshop questionnaire and the exchanges that took place during the workshop. It provides effective measures and lessons learned from the workshop that can be useful for ATT states parties, signatories and other stakeholders in Africa, as well as other regions.

The report is structured in line with the workshop agenda as follows:

- **Section 1** addresses the challenges faced by African states in joining the ATT and highlights effective measures shared by participants to overcome these obstacles.

- **Section 2** discusses the key challenges in establishing and maintaining a national control system and presents some approaches that states parties use to effectively implement treaty provisions. A box in this section also explores diversion challenges and prevention efforts.

- **Section 3** summarizes the discussions on the key challenges faced by ATT states parties present at the Monrovia Workshop in meeting their ATT reporting obligations. Additionally, boxes in the section provide information on the challenges faced by parties in meeting their financial obligations under the treaty and actively engaging in multilateral ATT processes.

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1   See **Annex 1** for the full list of states and organizations that participated in the Monrovia Workshop.

- **Section 4** outlines key lessons learned from international and regional cooperation initiatives that support ATT universalization and implementation in Africa. Boxes also highlight available international assistance opportunities and ongoing efforts and measures that regional and subregional organizations can adopt to advance ATT adoption and implementation.

- The report concludes by briefly summarizing the common challenges and areas for further focus to support effective implementation and universalization of the treaty in Africa. A box presents practical guidance and tips that could be useful for organizing another regional dialogue on ATT universalization and effective implementation.

Box 1. About the Monrovia Workshop

Organizers and funding: The Monrovia Workshop was organized by LiNCA in partnership with UNIDIR, with financial support from the ATT VTF.

Goals and objectives: The four-day workshop brought together over 50 participants to facilitate the first pan-African exchange to enhance efforts to:

(a) Increase the number of African ATT states parties
(b) Support effective implementation to achieve the object and purpose of the treaty
(c) Enable African states parties to fulfil their ATT obligations

Participants: To foster a balanced dialogue on the key challenges and effective measures for enhancing ATT universalization and implementation in Africa, the workshop organizers invited a diverse group of African states, representing different geographic subregions and varying levels of ATT involvement. Participants included nominated national government experts from 19 African states: 9 ATT states parties, 6 signatories, and 4 non-signatory states as of March 2024. The workshop also featured representatives from the African Union, ECOWAS, IGAD, RECSA, SADC and the ATT Secretariat, who contributed broader perspectives from the regional and multilateral levels (see Annex 1).

Methodology: To align the workshop agenda with the priorities of the participating states, the organizers distributed a pre-workshop questionnaire containing both open-ended and multiple-choice questions. This enabled participants to highlight, in advance of the workshop, key challenges they are facing as well as national lessons learned and effective measures for ATT universalization and implementation. The results informed the development of the agenda. Additionally, participants received a "food for thought" paper containing background information on the status of ATT universalization and implementation in Africa, key priorities identified, and guiding questions to aid in preparing presentations on national experiences related to selected topics. This resource facilitated participants' substantive preparations for the workshop.

Format: The workshop featured a balanced mix of plenary sessions, breakout group discussions and group exercises. It followed the Chatham House Rule. This format encouraged both formal and informal peer-to-peer exchanges, providing a safe space for participants to share their challenges and focus on identifying effective measures to overcome them. By avoiding the traditional approach of successive pedagogical presentations, the workshop facilitated interaction and active engagement among participants.

Outcomes and expected impact: The Monrovia Workshop supported the identification of effective measures that have been tried and tested by African states for overcoming challenges to ATT universalization and implementation. This report is expected to support the sharing of workshop findings with the wider ATT community. The Monrovia Workshop project will therefore benefit not only African states but also states and ATT stakeholders from other regions.

Participants at the Monrovia Workshop, 18–21 March 2024. Credit: © LiNCA, 2024.

1. ATT universalization in Africa: Key challenges and effective measures

Box 2. What is ATT universalization?

The 2019 ATT Universalization Toolkit defines universalization as "expanding the membership of the Treaty to ensure there are as many states parties as possible".[2] There are two options for becoming an ATT state party:

1. Ratification, acceptance or approval is the process whereby a state that signed the treaty between its opening for signature on 3 June 2013 and its entry into force on 24 December 2014 deposits an instrument of ratification (Article 21(1)).

2. Accession is the process whereby a state that did not sign the treaty before its entry into force deposits an instrument of accession after it has entered into force (Article 21(2)).

A state becomes a party to the ATT and its obligations under the treaty become binding 90 days after it deposits its instrument of ratification or accession with the United Nations Secretary-General (Article 22). Additionally, under Article 23 of the ATT, a state may provisionally apply Article 6 (on prohibitions) and Article 7 (on export and export assessment) before becoming a State Party, from the time of its signature of the treaty or during the 90 days after it deposits its instrument of ratification or accession.

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2   ATT Working Group on Treaty Universalization, "ATT Universalization Toolkit", ATT/CSP5.WGTU/2019/CHAIR/532/Conf. Rep, Annex A, 26 July 2019, https://thearmstradetreaty.org/hyper-images/file/ATT_CSP5_ATT Universalization Toolkit (Annex A to WGTU Co-chairs Draft Report to CSP5)/ATT_CSP5_ATT Universalization Toolkit (Annex A to WGTU Co-chairs Draft Report to CSP5).pdf, p. 2.

As of March 2024, when the workshop took place, a total of 29 of the 113 ATT states parties were African, and a further 11 African states were among the 28 ATT signatories.[3] Among the 54 United Nations Member States that were neither ATT states parties nor signatories, a total of 14 were African. In other words, at the time of the Monrovia Workshop, 46 per cent of African states were not yet ATT states parties.

Against this backdrop, the Day 1 of the workshop focused on discussing the challenges to ATT universalization faced by African states, as well as on effective measures for overcoming them.

Participants highlighted the following five common challenges:

1. Limited awareness on the ATT and lack of political will on the part of key decision makers and high-level government officials

2. Lack of technical expertise for harmonizing national legislation and regulations with the ATT's provisions

3. Difficulty in securing parliamentary or executive approval for the final steps of the ratification or accession process (see Box 2)

4. Challenges to inter-agency cooperation to ensure a smooth ratification or accession process

5. Concerns regarding the national security implications of becoming an ATT state party, particularly with regards to the state's ability to acquire conventional arms and revealing information on arms imports in ATT annual reports.

Workshop participants highlighted that many of these challenges are interconnected and do not exist in isolation. For example, states that reported limited awareness and understanding of the ATT among high-level officials as a key barrier to advancing ATT ratification or accession efforts also often reported inter-agency cooperation and coordination challenges, as well as difficulties in securing parliamentary or executive approval during the final stages of the process. This suggests that taking steps at different stages in the ratification or accession process to increase sensitization and awareness-raising among key decision makers about the strategic benefits of joining the ATT could be important for overcoming barriers to ATT universalization in Africa.

A key point that merits further consideration is the concern expressed by some participants from ATT signatory and non-signatory states regarding the national security implications of becoming an ATT state party. They expressed apprehension that joining the ATT might restrict their states' ability to acquire conventional arms, with an impact on defence capabilities. Furthermore, some feared that disclosing arms import information in ATT annual reports could compromise national security.

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3   The data used in this report represents the status of ATT universalization as of the time of hosting the Monrovia Workshop in March 2024. For the most updated data see ATT Secretariat, "Treaty Status", n.d., https://www.thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-status.html.

In addition, the five main challenges listed above were not only reported by participants from ATT signatory states or non-signatory states, but also mentioned by certain states parties that had faced similar obstacles during their ratification or accession processes. At the regional level, this under-scores the importance of exchanging lessons learned on common challenges and on effective measures for overcoming them.

Table 1 summarizes the concrete steps that participants from ATT states parties shared to help signatory and non-signatory states overcome these challenges and advance their ATT ratification and accession efforts.

Table 1. Summary of key challenges faced by Africa states in ATT universalization and effective measures for overcoming them

CHALLENGES	EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE MEASURES SHARED AT THE WORKSHOP
1. Limited awareness on the ATT and lack of political will	• Organizing sensitization and awareness-raising activities including at the high level for senior government officials and decision makers, at the mid-levels targeting civil servants and at the grass-roots level targeting local communities
2. Lack of technical expertise for harmonizing national arms control legislation and regulations with the ATT	• Establishing technical working groups composed of legal experts to oversee the legislative review process • Leveraging regional and international partnerships for legislative assistance
3. Difficulty in securing parliamentary or executive approval for the ratification or accession process	• Conducting targeted and regular consultations with key stakeholders including parliamentarians and other key decision makers
4. Poor inter-agency cooperation	• Establishing an inter-ministerial coordination body or a dedicated task force for the ratification process accessed remotely
5. Concerns regarding the national security implications of becoming an ATT state party, particularly the state's ability to acquire conventional arms and revealing information on arms imports in ATT annual reports	• Providing capacity-building activities for key officials on the object and purpose of the treaty

Participants at the Monrovia Workshop, 18–21 March 2024. Credit: © LiNCA, 2024.

2. ATT implementation in Africa: Key challenges and effective measures for national control systems

Article 5(2) of the ATT requires states parties to establish and maintain a national control system, including a national control list. These steps are needed to implement the provisions in Articles 6–15 of the treaty, which relate to the export, import, transit, trans-shipment and brokering of the conventional arms listed in Articles 2–4. When asked in the pre-workshop questionnaire to identify their top five priorities for the Monrovia Workshop, more than a third of the respondents highlighted "national implementation" as key, emphasizing the importance of exchanging national experience and knowledge in this regard. Figure 1 shows the ranking of priorities proposed by the 19 states that participated in the workshop.

Figure 1. Priorities for the Monrovia Workshop, as indicated by participants

Priority	Value
CAPACITY-BUILDING	7
GAP ANALYSIS	7
NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION	7
LEGAL ASSISTANCE	8
NATIONAL CONTROL LIST	8
DIVERSION PREVENTION	9
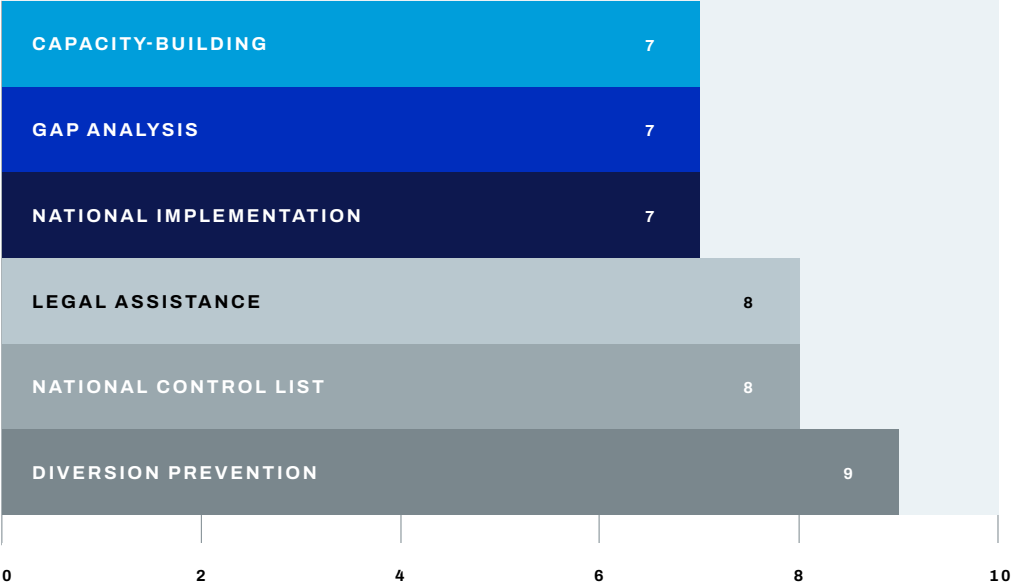
Participants spent Day 2 of the Monrovia Workshop discussing the challenges that they have faced, or continue to face, in establishing and maintaining a national control system for ATT implementation. As seen in Figure 1, participants indicated that preventing diversion is a high priority. The key discussion points on this issue are shared in Box 3.

Participants indicated that there have been challenges with implementing specific treaty provisions, such as designating competent national authorities and national points of contact in accordance with ATT Article 5. They also indicated that, although not explicitly required by the treaty, partners and guidance materials have recommended conducting a gap analysis or baseline assessment of their national legislation, practices and measures. Conducting such assessments has been a challenge. An even bigger challenge has been to update existing national legislation or to draft and adopt new legislation and regulations to domesticate the treaty. Workshop participants identified the following five common challenges during these processes, and for national ATT implementation in general:

1. Lack of resources (human, financial and logistical)
2. Lack of inter-agency cooperation and coordination
3. Delays in designating ATT national points of contact
4. Limited technical expertise on the part of key officials involved in national ATT implementation
5. Inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks (e.g. lacking definitions and provisions for implementing key ATT obligations)

The exchange of experiences on ways forward and solutions highlighted that there is no "one size fits all" approach to ATT implementation. Each state follows a unique path, shaped by its national priorities, circumstances and available resources. In this regard, participants stressed the importance of conducting a gap analysis either before or shortly after becoming a state party. This process involves

reviewing "arms transfer control policies, legislation, regulations, and administrative procedures it has in place to assess the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, inconsistencies, and general level of compliance of its existing system with the Treaty obligation"[4] and supports the development of a road map tailored to national needs. Additionally, participants emphasized the need for an adequate regulatory framework to provide a legal basis for the implementation of ATT provisions. Despite contextual specificities, participants identified a number of effective measures that can support effective treaty implementation in the region and help overcome common challenges (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of key challenges faced by African states in ATT implementation and effective measures for overcoming them

CHALLENGES	EFFECTIVE MEASURES SHARED AT THE WORKSHOP
1. Lack of resources (human, financial, logistical)	• Leveraging available international and regional cooperation mechanisms and partnerships for assistance
2. Lack of inter-agency coordination	• Designating a lead entity for coordinating national ATT implementation • Establishing a dedicated ATT inter-agency committee • Instituting inter-agency information-exchange platforms • Using existing inter-agency frameworks (e.g. international humanitarian law committee, national commission on small arms and light weapons)
3. Delays in designating the ATT national point of contact	• Prioritizing the designation of the national ATT point of contact before or soon after becoming an ATT state party
4. Limited shared technical expertise on the part of key officials involved in national ATT implementation	• Organizing training and capacity-building activities. • Developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for implementing technical ATT provisions
5. Inadequate legal and regulatory framework and arms control infrastructure	• Conducting a gap analysis or baseline assessment of the national legal and regulatory framework • Developing a national ATT implementation road map, including legislative review as a priority • Leveraging regional and international partnerships for legislative assistance

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4   ATT Working Group on Effective Treaty Implementation (WGETI), "Voluntary Basic Guide to Establishing a National Control System", ATT/CSP5.WGETI/2019/CHAIR/529/Conf.Rep, Annex A, 26 July 2019, https://thearmstradetreaty.org/hyper-im-ages/file/ATT_CSP5_WGETI Voluntary Basic Guide (Annex A to WGETI Report to CSP5)(updated 09.09.2019)(Rev WA)/ATT_CSP5_WGETI Voluntary Basic Guide (Annex A to WGETI Report to CSP5)(updated 09.09.2019)(Rev WA).pdf, p. 4.

Box 3. Challenges in diversion prevention and effective measures to overcome them

Article 11 of the ATT outlines obligations and recommendations for states parties to prevent, mitigate and address diversion. Almost half of the states participating in the Monrovia Workshop identified diversion as a key priority issue (see Figure 1). As a result, the Monrovia Workshop agenda included dedicated sessions for sharing national experiences and discussing key challenges, lessons learned and effective measures for preventing diversion in Africa.

Key challenges in diversion-prevention efforts in Africa:

Workshop participants cited the following five common challenges:

1. Absence of legal provisions in national legislation for implementing ATT Article 11
2. Insufficient financial and technical resources for implementing effective diversion-detection and -response measures across relevant national agencies
3. Porous borders and insufficient border-control mechanisms facilitates illicit arms trafficking and diversion
4. Interference – feared or actual – in investigations of diversion cases by certain government officials
5. Corruption among some public office holders

Lessons learned and effective measures to counter diversion

Participants also shared their experiences of the effective measures that they have implemented within their respective states to counter diversion. These included:

- Updating legal frameworks to include the provisions contained in ATT Article 11
- Enhancing capacity-building and training for authorities on counter-diversion methods in collaboration with international partners
- Conducting baseline assessments to identify gaps in national control systems with regards to countering diversion, and determining concrete steps to address such gaps
- Implementing appropriate measures such as:
  - Verifying end-user certificates and inspecting consignments
  - Using advanced screening equipment at ports
  - Issuing delivery-verification certificates
  - Escorting in-state arms shipments

- Engaging in bilateral cooperation for countering diversion, such as conducting joint border patrols and checks with relevant competent national authorities in neighbouring states

- Implementing effective weapons and ammunition stockpile-management practices

- Leveraging international assistance to develop tracing/tracking systems and train personnel

Participants at the Monrovia Workshop, 18–21 March 2024. Credit: © LiNCA, 2024.

3. Fulfilling ATT reporting obligations: Key challenges and effective measures

Article 13 of the ATT requires states parties to submit two types of report to the ATT Secretariat. Article 13(1) requires an initial report, within one year of the treaty's entry into force for that state, that details the measures it has taken to implement the ATT. Article 13(3) then mandates that each party submits an annual report on the authorized or actual exports and imports of conventional arms, as defined in Article 2(1), for the previous calendar year (1 January–31 December). These reporting obligations support the treaty's object and purpose with regards to ensuring transparency, fostering accountability and promoting trust between states engaged in the international trade of conventional arms.

As of March 2024, only 17 of the 29 African ATT states parties required to submit an ATT initial report had done so.[5] Moreover, only 10 African ATT states parties had submitted their annual report for actual and authorized arms exports and imports that took place in 2022. These statistics align with the findings from the pre-workshop questionnaire, where over a quarter of respondents indicated "reporting" as a key challenge in their national ATT implementation efforts. As a result, reporting was considered a priority issue for discussion during the workshop. During Day 3, participants focused on sharing key challenges faced in meeting ATT reporting obligations, as well as concrete examples of the effective measures to be taken.

Generally, participants shared that an overall limited understanding of the treaty's reporting obligations represents an obstacle, often resulting in reporting duties being deprioritized. Many also noted a frequent lack of capacity dedicated to reporting tasks, coupled with a lack of technical knowledge. Beyond these general obstacles, participants identified specific challenges in implementing the obligations contained in Article 13(1) or Article 13(3).

First, with regards to preparing and submitting an initial report (Article 13(1)), lack of inter-agency cooperation was raised as a main challenge. One representative also explained that, in their state, key decision makers had been hesitant to disclose their struggle to implement measures related to the binding obligations of the treaty, which in turn reduced the openness of senior officials to submitting an initial report.

Second, concerning annual reporting obligations (Article 13(3)), workshop participants indicated five main challenges:

1. Insufficient training and low technical know-how on the use of the ATT Secretariat's reporting templates
2. Lack of information-sharing and coordination among relevant competent authorities
3. Inadequate record-keeping practices within certain government agencies
4. Differences in record-keeping systems among various national authorities, including variations in terminologies for classifying weapons
5. Conflicts and socioeconomic and political crises resulting in a collapse of or chaos within national security agencies, thereby impeding efforts to collect data and prepare annual reports

Despite the persistent challenges discussed, workshop participants acknowledged the importance of promoting transparency in the international arms trade. They emphasized the need to enhance peer-to-peer exchanges and mentoring among states at the regional and international levels in order to facilitate the exchange of effective measures to strengthen compliance among African states with this critical ATT obligation. Several of the effective African measures for enabling annual reporting shared during the workshop are presented in Table 3.

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5   Statistics on ATT reporting accessed from the ATT Secretariat's website.

Table 3. Summary of key challenges faced by African states in meeting the ATT annual reporting obligation and effective measures for overcoming them

CHALLENGES	EFFECTIVE MEASURES SHARED AT THE WORKSHOP
1. Insufficient training and low technical know-how on the use of the ATT Secretariat's reporting templates	• Organizing training and capacity-building activities focused on reporting, in collaboration with regional and international partners • Developing a national procedures document for preparing ATT annual reports
2. Lack of information-sharing and coordination among relevant competent authorities	• Establishing an information-exchange platform to facilitate the sharing of data relevant to compiling ATT annual reports among competent national authorities • Designating a lead entity for coordinating national ATT-implementation efforts, including annual reporting • Establishing a dedicated ATT annual reporting committee to manage collecting and compiling information and preparing the annual reports
3. Inadequate record-keeping practices within certain government agencies	• Organizing training and capacity-building activities on effective record-keeping practices • Developing and adopting standard operating procedures (SOPs) for record-keeping
4. Differences in record-keeping systems among various national authorities, including variations in terminologies for classifying weapons	• Encouraging inter-agency dialogues and adopting shared classifications and terminologies for weapons among various national security agencies
5. Conflicts and socio-economic and political crises resulting in a collapse of or chaos within national security agencies, thereby impeding efforts to collect data and prepare annual reports	• Taking advantage of the opportunity to submit late reports, as permitted by the treaty

On Day 3, participants also discussed the key challenges in fulfilling their financial obligations under the treaty and actively engaging in ATT processes at the multilateral level. The key discussion points on these issues appear in Boxes 4 and 5.

Box 4. Challenges faced by African states in paying assessed financial contributions and effective measures for overcoming them

The first Conference of States Parties to the ATT (CSP1), in 2015, established the annual organization of CSPs and adopted financial rules in accordance with treaty Articles 17(2) and 17(3). According to Financial Rules 5 and 6, states parties are required to pay assessed financial contributions to support the organization of CSPs and the operations of the ATT Secretariat. As of March 2024, of the 43 African states assessed for contributions for 2015–2023, only 19 have fulfilled their financial obligations, reflecting a 44 per cent compliance rate among African states.[6] This was consistent with the pre-workshop questionnaire findings, where two states identified "payment of financial contributions" as a major challenge in ATT implementation, alongside many others that cited limited resources. The workshop provided the opportunity to discuss these challenges and effective measures for overcoming them.

Key challenges faced in paying assessed financial contributions include:

- Lack of awareness of the obligation
- Ambiguity in responsibility among competent national authorities
- Lack of awareness and a limited understanding on the available payment options and modalities
- Missed communications from the ATT Secretariat due to frequent changes in ATT national points of contacts
- Insufficient national financial resources, resulting in a lack of priority or political will to fulfil the obligation

The discussions facilitated the identification of several concrete steps that have been implemented by several African states to enhance compliance with financial obligations. These include:

- Agreeing flexible payment arrangements with the ATT Secretariat, including for the payment of arrears
- Including defined roles and responsibilities of the competent national authorities involved in the payment of assessed financial contributions in a national procedures document or ATT implementation road map or plan
- Awareness raising for high-level officials on the strategic importance of paying assessed financial contributions
- Advocacy by the lead competent authority for ATT financial obligations to be integrated into national budgetary planning processes

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6   These statistics were shared by the Head of the ATT Secretariat during his presentation at the Monrovia Workshop.

Box 5. Challenges faced by African states for engaging actively in the ATT process and effective measures for overcoming them

Active participation in multilateral ATT meetings (e.g., CSPs, preparatory sessions and working groups) plays a crucial role in facilitating the exchange of views and sharing national experiences on treaty implementation among stakeholders from various regions. Participants at the Monrovia Workshop highlighted several challenges that hinder their effective participation in these processes, as well as effective measures for overcoming them.

Key challenges faced in engaging actively in the ATT process include:

- Financial constraints
- Challenges in securing visas
- Challenges in receiving authorization in time to participate in meetings due to bureaucracy within government agencies
- Frequent changes in national points of contact, resulting in missing messages from the ATT Secretariat

The discussions facilitated the identification of several concrete steps that have been implemented by several African states to engage actively in the ATT process. These include:

- Applying for sponsorship from the ATT Secretariat and other international partners to facilitate attendance at CSP and working group meetings
- Awareness raising for high-level officials on the strategic importance of participating in ATT meetings
- Advocacy by the lead competent authority for dates of ATT meetings to be included in national activity planning
- Effective communication on point of contact changes to the ATT Secretariat

4. Experiences and lessons learned in accessing international assistance and cooperation for ATT universalization and implementation in Africa

In Article 16(3), the ATT provides for the establishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund. This is the main assistance mechanism made available to states parties to support national implementation of the treaty. While workshop discussions focused on the VTF, it should be noted that other international and regional cooperation and assistance mechanisms are available to African states in their ATT universalization and implementation efforts (see Boxes 6 and 7). In addition, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) also provide support to African states by conducting workshops and training and by supporting advocacy.

Box 6. International assistance and cooperation programmes supporting ATT universalization and implementation

To assist states parties in implementing the ATT, various international and regional organizations and NGOs have launched dedicated programmes. These programmes provide financial, technical or logistical assistance to help strengthen national control systems and facilitate the treaty's universalization and effective implementation. Some of these key initiatives include:

Key challenges faced in engaging actively in the ATT process include:

- The ATT Secretariat's implementation-support project
- Regional cooperation and assistance mechanisms (e.g. the European Union Arms Trade Treaty Outreach Project)
- The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR)
- Bilateral cooperation mechanisms
- ATT capacity-building initiatives by CSOs, think tanks and specialized NGOs (e.g. Control Arms Academy, Saferworld)

On Day 4 of discussions, participants focused on exploring how the VTF could deliver impactful assistance projects to advance African states' ATT universalization and implementation efforts. Discussions centred on lessons learned from applying to the VTF and delivering projects with awarded grants. Fifteen of the 19 African states that participated in the Monrovia Workshop had implemented at least one ATT VTF project as of March 2024.[7] National representatives from these states therefore shared valuable insights from their experiences in applying to the VTF and delivering projects to advance ATT universalization and implementation with VTF support. The following elements were highlighted as key conditions when developing a VTF application:

- Understanding the political commitment of applicant states to ATT universalization and implementation efforts
- Developing a clear rationale and aims for the proposed project
- Demonstrating how the project fits within the state's overall ATT-implementation strategy or road map
- Assessing the relationship of the project to other initiatives, whether supported by domestic programmes or international cooperation and assistance initiatives
- Crafting a well-designed project plan that addresses elements such as phasing, activities, timescale, roles and budget
- Incorporating appropriate controls such as risk assessment, mitigation measures and monitoring frameworks
- Defining the role and responsibilities of any implementing partners

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7   Details of projects selected by the VTF are available from the ATT Secretariat, "Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF)", n.d., https://thearmstradetreaty.org/voluntary.html.

The representative from the ATT Secretariat explained that the VTF Selection Committee assesses all these factors to evaluate the reasonableness, coherence and feasibility of each application. Detailed guidance on the VTF application process is available on the ATT Secretariat website.[8]

Box 7. Efforts by regional and subregional organizations in support of ATT universalization and implementation efforts in Africa

Regional and subregional organizations can play a crucial role in advancing states' progress towards joining and implementing the ATT. Representatives from the African Union and African subregional organizations at the Monrovia Workshop highlighted effective measures and notable initiatives that they have undertaken to support their member states in ATT universalization and implementation. These included:

- **African Union**: Coordinating regional efforts, including resource mobilization, organizing high-level strategic dialogues and establishing relevant partnerships (including with international actors) to support African Union member states in their ATT universalization and implementation efforts
- **ECOWAS**: Developing a guide that highlights the synergies and complementarities between the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the ATT, helping ECOWAS member states understand how these instruments align
- **IGAD**: Organizing workshops and consultative meetings focused on ATT universalization for its member states
- **RECSA**: Acting as an implementing partner, providing technical expertise for several ATT VTF projects in RECSA member states
- **SADC**: Supporting various initiatives to control small arms and light weapons in SADC member states, particularly in the context of implementing the SADC Firearms Protocol, and consequently contributing to those states' effective implementation of the ATT

Participants also proposed for consideration additional ways in which regional and subregional organizations could strengthen ATT universalization and implementation efforts in Africa. These included:

- Providing political support and engaging in high-level sensitization efforts to advance ATT universalization initiatives by member states of these organizations
- Organizing workshops at the regional or subregional levels to facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges on ATT universalization and implementation
- Encouraging mentorship and technical exchanges among the organization's member states focused on ATT universalization and implementation activities
- Establishing mechanisms to track progress and identify gaps in member states' ATT implementation efforts and providing appropriate tailored assistance

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8   Ibid.

CONCLUSION.
Key lessons learned and tips for organizing a regional workshop on universalization and effective implementation of the ATT

The Monrovia Workshop successfully achieved its primary objective of creating a platform for representatives from African states to exchange national experiences, lessons learned and effective measures for overcoming challenges to ATT universalization and implementation.[9] Participants engaged in open discussions that revealed four overarching and cross-cutting challenges:

1. A lack of awareness of the ATT among key stakeholders
2. Limited technical expertise
3. Poor inter-agency cooperation and coordination
4. Resource constraints

Despite these, the workshop facilitated the sharing of effective measures and lessons learned to enhance ATT universalization and implementation efforts across Africa. Participants highlighted the importance of high-level sensitization, continuous capacity-building, legislative reviews to support the integration of ATT provisions into national legislation, and leveraging regional and international cooperation mechanisms for assistance.

In their post-workshop questionnaires, participants proposed several topics for consideration in future workshops on ATT universalization and implementation in Africa, some of which could also be applicable for other regions. These included:

- Enhancing inter-agency cooperation for ATT universalization and implementation efforts
- Regional experiences in preventing diversion, including the sharing of concrete national diversion cases
- Capacity-building for implementing diversion-prevention measures
- Developing national control lists
- Exploring the role of regional and civil society organizations in ATT universalization and implementation efforts

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9   This is based on the feedback provided by participants in their post-workshop questionnaires.

- Examining the impact of ATT universalization and effective implementation on broader national, regional and multilateral peace, security and development agendas, such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the SDGs

- The role of the ATT in promoting peacebuilding in conflict and transitional security settings

- Regulating the transit and trans-shipment of conventional arms

Looking ahead, the prospects for ATT universalization and implementation in Africa are promising. The Monrovia Workshop not only facilitated valuable exchanges of experiences and lessons learned but also spurred concrete progress. For example, in June–July 2024, the Gambia and Malawi became the two newest ATT states parties. Continued focus by states and other relevant stakeholders on enhancing inter-agency cooperation, capacity-building, and leveraging regional and international partnerships will be essential to overcome the persistent challenges highlighted throughout this report. By building on the momentum generated by the workshop, African states can further advance their commitments to the ATT, concretely contributing – in cooperation with their international and regional partners – to regional peace, security, and sustainable development efforts and initiatives (see Box 8).

Box 8. Practical guidance and tips for organizing a regional workshop on ATT universalization and effective implementation

To support other regional initiatives to promote ATT universalization and effective implementation, the following lessons learned and tips are offered for consideration.

PRE-WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Participant selection and invitations

- When selecting states to invite, aim for a representative sample that reflects diverse geographic subregions and varying statuses in relation to the ATT (e.g., states parties, signatories and non-signatory states). When choosing non-parties, whether signatory or non-signatory states, take into account:
   - national statements on the ATT and conventional arms control
   - participation in ATT CSP meetings
   - implementation of ATT VTF or other assistance projects

- In the invitation letter, clearly identify the targeted participants. Ideal attendees include ATT national points of contact, governmental experts from agencies, departments or ministries involved in regulating international arms transfers or addressing arms diversion, as well as parliamentarians and representatives from civil society and academia who have engaged in ATT universalization and implementation efforts.

- Send out invitations at least three to six months in advance of the workshop or meeting. This ensures enough time to accommodate any declined invitations and to arrange suitable replacements if necessary, helping to maintain full attendance.

- Make use of both formal and informal communications channels to promote the event, address any questions, and follow up on invitation responses. This approach helps raise awareness and encourages engagement with appropriate expert participants.

- In addition to national representatives, consider inviting representatives from relevant regional and subregional organizations. Their participation offers broader perspectives from the regional level and can enhance support for the organizations' member states in their ATT ratification and implementation efforts.

Box 8. continued

Preparation, distribution and analysis of pre-workshop questionnaires

- Prepare a pre-workshop questionnaire to gather participants' input on the key issues and priorities that they would like to address during the workshop.

- Use the questionnaire to identify areas of ATT universalization or implementation where participants feel confident about sharing their national experiences with other states.

- Tailor the questionnaire for different groups – states parties, signatories and non- signatory/non-states parties – by adjusting the questions according to their specific ATT status.

- Consider sending out the pre-workshop questionnaire along with the workshop invitations and set a common deadline for both. This supports gathering both substantive and logistical information from participants in a timely manner.

Preparation of the agenda

- Design the workshop agenda based on the priorities identified by participants in the pre- workshop questionnaire.

- Ideally, plan for at least four days, each dedicated to a key objective of the workshop.

- Mix plenary sessions and presentations with breakout group discussions and peer-to-peer exchanges to foster both formal and informal dialogue and active participation.

- Allocate sufficient time following substantive presentations and the sharing of national experiences for Q&A and comments from the floor. This allows participants to provide feedback on discussions, raise questions and clarify any points that may need further explanation.

Substantive preparations

- Consider preparing a background or "food for thought" paper which outlines the key issues and priorities to be discussed. Circulate this to participants at least one week before the workshop to help them prepare.

- Based on participants' responses in the pre-workshop questionnaire, assign them with specific topics on which to make presentations on their national experiences. Offer assistance for their preparation if needed, and request that final presentations be submitted at least one week before the workshop.

Logistical arrangements

- Choose a venue that promotes active engagement and full participation from attendees. Ensure it has suitable spaces for breakout group discussions and informal exchanges and, if necessary, includes facilities for interpretation.

- At the latest one day ahead of the workshop, schedule a test of all essential equipment, including interpretation systems, microphones and other ICT tools, to ensure that everything functions smoothly.

Box 8. continued

DURING THE WORKSHOP

Maintaining flexibility

- Monitor interactions and behaviour during the workshop sessions on the first day and be ready to adjust the agenda and methodology based on these observations to enhance engagement.

Assignment of breakout groups

- Aim to form breakout groups that reflect diversity in geography, language needs and ATT status to enrich discussions and ensure inclusivity.

Note-taking

- Ensure that note-takers are assigned for every session, including breakout groups, to capture key insights and discussions effectively.

Coordination

- Maintain open communication with the conference facility staff to ensure that any changes to the agenda are effectively coordinated with meal and break times.

POST-WORKSHOP

Post-workshop questionnaire

- Prepare a post-workshop questionnaire to gather participants feedback on both the substantive and the logistical arrangements for the workshop and recommendations for future workshops.

Monitoring and reporting

- Keep track of developments in participating states related to their ATT universalization and implementation efforts and share relevant updates with the appropriate stakeholders.

Participants at the Monrovia Workshop, 18–21 March 2024. Credit: © UNIDIR, 2024.

ANNEX 1.
List of participating states and organizations at the Monrovia Workshop

A) States

	STATES		ATT STATUS AS OF MARCH 2024
1	Angola		Signatory
2	Cameroon		State party
3	Central African Republic		State party
4	Comoros		Signatory
5	Côte d'Ivoire		State party
6	Democratic Republic of the Congo		Non-signatory
7	The Gambia		Non-signatory
8	Ghana		State party
9	Kenya		Non-signatory
10	Liberia		State party

	STATES		ATT STATUS AS OF MARCH 2024
11	Libya		Signatory
12	Malawi		Signatory
13	Mauritius		State party
14	Nigeria		State party
15	Rwanda		Signatory
16	Sierra Leone		State party
17	Somalia		Non-signatory
18	United Republic of Tanzania		Signatory
19	Zambia		State party

B) Regional organizations

1. African Union
2. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
3. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
4. Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA)

C) International organizations

1. Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat (ATT Secretariat)
2. United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

UNIDIR