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Iran, North Korea block international arms trade treaty



Iran and North Korea blocked on Thursday the adoption of a U.N. treaty that would regulate the multimillion-dollar international arms trade. The countries rejected a proposed set of standards aimed at preventing the illegal export of conventional weapons, including small arms and missile launchers as well as tanks and warships.

To be approved, the draft treaty needed support from all 193 U.N. member states.

North Korea's delegate said the proposed text could be "politically manipulated by major arms exporters," as he objected to the accord. Iran's U.N. ambassador, Mohammed Khazaee, called the proposed accord "discriminatory." After both countries raised their flags at the final negotiating session to signal their objection, conference president Peter Woolcott of Australia suspended the meeting for behind-the-scenes talks. Supporters of the treaty said that if it was not adopted they would go to the General Assembly and put the draft to a vote where they expect overwhelming approval. Negotiations represented a desire to salvage the decades-long effort to set an international standard for cross-border arms sales.

U.N. members pored over a "take it or leave it" draft ahead of Thursday's crunch decision on what would have been the first ever treaty to regulate the conventional arms trade.

Woolcott, on Wednesday, gave U.N. members the final draft hammered out in nine days of marathon talks.

"I will not consider further amendments. It is take it or leave it," Woolcott told the conference as he presented the draft that has been given particularly close scrutiny by the major arms producing nations.

NGO support

“While there are still deficiencies in this final draft, this treaty has the potential to provide significant human rights protection and curb armed conflict and violence if all governments demonstrate the political will to implement it,” Brian Wood of Amnesty International said.

Anna Macdonald of Oxfam added that there were “some improvements” in the draft, though some problems remained before the final decision was made, reported Israeli newspaper Haaretz on Thursday.

“We need a treaty that will make a difference to the lives of the people living in Congo, Mali, Syria and elsewhere who suffer each day from the impacts of armed violence,” she said.