**First Statement – Mandela for Rights and Democracy**

**Before the Working Group on Effective Implementation of Arms Trade Treaty**

**Subject: Role of Industry in Arms Transfers to Conflict Zones**

**Mr. President,**

Arms manufacturing and exporting companies play a pivotal role in ensuring that arms transfers are conducted responsibly and in compliance with international law, particularly in the context of armed conflicts. Under international humanitarian law, these companies are expected to take all possible measures to prevent their weapons from being used to commit serious human rights violations or war crimes.

Unfortunately, the reality shows that several companies operating in this sector continue to supply parties to conflicts, whether governments or armed groups, with weapons that are directly used to perpetrate egregious violations.

For instance, in **Myanmar**, Israeli and American companies provided equipment and materials that enabled the military to produce weapons used in systematic killings of civilians. Reports indicate that these companies exported hundreds of tons of military equipment to the Myanmar army, despite documented evidence of its repeated violations. In **Gaza**, major American companies like Boeing continue to supply Israel with weapons used in operations that have resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians and widespread destruction of infrastructure.

**Mr. President,**

UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted by the Human Rights Council in 2011, state that all companies, including those in the defense sector, must respect human rights and assess the risks of potential violations arising from their products. This includes examining how the arms they export are used and preventing sales to those who may use them to commit crimes.

However, it is clear that many of these companies have not adhered to these principles and have not conducted a serious assessment of the impact of their activities on human rights. Therefore, states must take responsibility and establish effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure industry compliance with these principles.

**These mechanisms should include** risk assessments for transfers, reviews of end-use of weapons, and prevention of supply to entities proven to be involved in committing violations.

Achieving responsible arms trade is not solely the responsibility of governments; it also requires accountability from the private sector and the activation of international law tools to protect civilians and human rights.

**Thank you.**