GENEVA, Switzerland, September 11 (Infosplusgabon) - The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Peter Maurer on Monday reminded the international community of the negative impact arms flows are having on societies around the globe.

The ICRC said in a press release that Maurer warned that failure by States to manage the arms trade responsibly is putting a cheap prize on the lives of civilians.

Speaking at the opening of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) Conference in Geneva, Maurer said: “Arms continue to flow – overtly and covertly – to belligerents and violent extremists in parts of the Middle East, Africa and Asia."

"It also feeds organized crime in the Americas," he said, adding that arms transfers are at their highest levels since the end of the Cold War.

“Recently, in Yemen I saw how the war is eroding almost every aspect of people’s lives. The arms trade is rife and continues to flow despite repeated violations of international humanitarian law.

Public services have been bombed, the health system is on its knees, and an unprecedented cholera epidemic has broken out.

He said he met mothers forced to make impossible decisions about whether to buy food or expensive medicines for their families.

Maurer called upon States to consider their obligation to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in their arms transfer decisions.

It is of utmost importance that States honor commitments under the ATT, he said, and urged the global community to turn words into deeds.

A comprehensive study on arms availability undertaken by the ICRC in 1999 demonstrated that there was a clear correlation between easy access to arms in armed conflicts and the commission of war crimes.

As long as weapons are too easily available, there is a high risk that they will be misused, lives will be lost, serious violations of international humanitarian law will be facilitated, and medical and humanitarian assistance will be endangered, ICRC said.

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