

**Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition**

**New York, 23-27 May 2022**

**Statement of the UN Coordinating Action on Small Arms**

**Wednesday, 25 May 2022**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms, or ‘CASA’ – a mechanism of 24 UN entities working together on issues related to small arms and light weapons control, ammunition management and the arms trade.

CASA partners have long emphasized the serious security and humanitarian risk posed by inadequate ammunition management, including its detrimental impact on peace, security, human rights and development. Potential for unintended explosions and diversion to the illicit market exponentially increases when the security and safety of ammunition diminishes. As a corollary, effective through-life management of ammunition prevents unwanted diversion to illicit markets, including to non-State armed groups, terrorists and transnational criminal organizations. In addition to mitigating security breaches, the safe and secure management of ammunition also prevents humanitarian disasters, including death, injury and displacement that result from explosions at munitions sites. Furthermore, the availability of ammunition destabilizes communities and exacerbates situations of insecurity, including by facilitating the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, such

as grave violations against children. A proper management of ammunition is also crucial to support criminal investigations and prosecutions of offences related to their illicit manufacturing, movement and trafficking.

Two global legally binding arms control instruments, namely the United Nations Firearms Protocol that supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Arms Trade Treaty, already set important commitments among their States parties in the field of ammunition control: The Firearms Protocol requires States parties to criminalize the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in ammunition, to maintain information on ammunition for tracing purposes, to cooperate in the tracing of ammunition, to only transfer ammunition based on reciprocal authorizations and to take effective measures to detect, prevent and eliminate their theft, loss or diversion, and to provide one another the broadest possible cooperation in criminal matters to investigate and prosecute these offences. Complementary, the Arms Trade Treaty establishes a thorough system of export prohibitions and criteria that also apply to ammunition transfers. More than half of all Member States are a party to both instruments, committing themselves to implement these aspects, which are highly relevant for the effective through-life management of ammunition. Thus, CASA partners encourage Member States to consider these instruments and their accompanying processes as complementary building blocks of the new global framework.

To support States as well as relevant implementing partners on the ground, the United Nations developed the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) in 2011, at the request of the General Assembly. The IATG contain practical, modular guidance to support States and organizations in safely and securely managing conventional ammunition stockpiles.

Under the umbrella of the UN SaferGuard Programme, our knowledge-management programme on ammunition management, the United Nations system continues to promote the IATG, supporting States and other partners in further mitigating the brazen risks of unwanted blasts of depots and frequent diversion from ammunition stockpiles. Technical advice and assistance in line with the IATG has been provided by UN entities to national authorities and peace operations in various contexts. The United Nations has further supported States in conducting national weapons and ammunition baseline assessments assisting their efforts to comprehensively assess national institutions, policies, processes, capacities and responsibilities in the ammunition management life cycle and to put these findings into action. This includes also support provided by UN entities to enhance legislative and regulatory frameworks, and strengthen criminal justice responses to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in ammunition and related offences. Efforts have also been geared towards the development and deployment of comprehensive record keeping systems for both firearms and ammunition, which can greatly contribute to reinforce the concept of through-life management of ammunition promoted by the IATG. Likewise, the UN has continued its efforts to strengthen ammunition management in peace operation contexts, including support to troop and police contributing countries and as part of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes.

Regarding preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons “Technical guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Security Council resolution 2370 (2017) and related international standards and good practices on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons” were published in 2022. The technical guidelines aim at contributing to the enhancement of Member States’ legislative, strategic, and operational capacities to prevent, detect and counter the acquisition, illicit trafficking and use of different weapons, systems, and components.

Regional-level efforts have also been at the forefront of the United Nations engagement, supporting regional cooperation and coordination in the prevention and control of the illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of arms, ammunition and explosives. The Western Balkans Roadmap has been a good practice example of an integrated response supported by a comprehensive coordination and monitoring mechanism, leading to similar approaches being implemented in the European Union, the Caribbean and another under development in West Africa. These regional roadmaps containing voluntary targets and identifying related actions allow for measurability of implementation of regional and international arms control frameworks and contribute to the development of strategic partnerships for international cooperation and assistance among donor States, receiving States, as well as United Nations entities, regional and subregional organizations and civil society. Regional and cross-regional exchanges of good practices and lessons learned in ammunition control can further complement national and regional approaches.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The UN system's support to States towards effective, safe and secure ammunition management contributes to the broader context of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and its target related to a significant reduction in illicit arms flows and Goal 11 on safe cities. States have critically recognized that there can be no development without security and safety. Moreover, addressing poorly-managed ammunition constitutes a key component of the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament, Security Our Common Future. The Secretary-General has prioritized

“disarmament that saves lives” and views attention to ammunition management as a key element in realizing this pillar of his agenda.

The United Nations continue to stress the need for consistent mainstreaming of gender aspects into ammunition management policy and practice. Accordingly, CASA partners have carried out research to better understand the gender dimensions of ammunition management, underlining the gendered impacts of accidental explosions and diversion, highlighting women’s experiences in ammunition management and identifying practices for improved gender diversity in ammunition management.

We welcome the recommendations of the 2020-2021 group of governmental experts, established pursuant to resolution 72/55 and encourage Member States to build upon its important observations and assessments. We further welcome the recommendations adopted by consensus by the 2022 Working Group on Firearms, which dedicated one meeting to the topic of preventing and combatting the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in ammunition of firearms. Relevant recommendations of that meeting can be found in a separate statement on the meeting website and can be considered by States in the negotiations of the global framework for conventional ammunition.

The convening of this open-ended working group provides the required dedicated process at the multilateral level to comprehensively address both the safety and security challenges related to conventional ammunition and to tackle the need for a more comprehensive international regulatory framework for conventional ammunition.

CASA partners commend Member States’ efforts to elaborate a set of political commitments on through-life ammunition management. These would

complement and significantly reinforce the existing global framework on conventional arms control. In support of the further development and implementation of this framework, the UN system stands ready to provide coherent and tailored policy and technical advice and support to Member States at the global, regional and national level.

Thank you.

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