European Union Statement

Open-Ended Working Group on conventional ammunition
(established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/233)

Second substantive session

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Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Allow me first to congratulate you on your appointment as chairperson. The EU welcomes the transparent and inclusive way you have steered preparations for this meeting.

Mr. Chair,

The problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus continue to be of growing concern to the international community. Diverted ammunition fuels crime, terrorism, armed violence, gender based violence and instability, undermining sustainable development, good governance, law and order, as well as access to education, healthcare, justice and other civil rights. In so doing, it undermines progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), but also SDG 5 (gender equality) and 11 (sustainable cities and communities). At the same time, ineffective management of ammunition stockpiles can result in disastrous accidental explosions that cut short thousands of lives and destroy livelihoods and communities. With regards to the ammunition of small arms and light weapons, the EU considers that the UN Programme of Action on SALW continues to provide an effective framework for states to consider, commit to, and implement activities to address such impediments.

In his Agenda for Disarmament 'Securing our Common Future', which was presented on 24 May 2018, the UN Secretary-General called for addressing the excessive accumulation of conventional arms and the illicit trade in conventional arms and called for the support of country-level approaches on small arms. The EU has decided to support the Agenda's Action 22: 'Secure excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles'.

The EU welcomes a successful and substantive consensus outcome of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) that examined problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus and that concluded its work in September 2021. The EU also fully supports General Assembly resolution 76/233 adopted on 24 December 2021 that established a follow-up process on the GGE's work in the form of this Open-Ended Working Group.

The EU believes that the international community would benefit from the establishment of a comprehensive multilayer framework consisting in a set of political commitments that supports the safe, secure and sustainable through-life ammunition management with view to preventing both unplanned explosions and diversion. This comprehensive framework should be underpinned by voluntary efforts at the regional or subregional level that could also take the form of legally binding provisions and additional measures at national level. Moreover, the whole framework

should be supported by robust international cooperation and assistance. Such a comprehensive framework on conventional ammunition is complimentary to the careful consideration of this issue at the UN PoA on SALW.

Mr. Chair,

The European Union has been assisting third countries to improve the management and security of national stockpiles by strengthening national legislative and administrative frameworks and institutions that regulate the legitimate supply of SALW and ammunition for defence and security forces and the management of such stockpiles. The EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms & light weapons and their ammunition adopted on 19 November 2018, observes that poor stockpile security is a key factor that allows arms and ammunition to be diverted from the licit to the illicit markets. The EU SALW Strategy also commits the EU to promote and implement standards and good practices for the management of SALW and their ammunition, like the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and the Modular Small-Arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC).

The European Union and its Member States are top donors for small arms control assistance and capacity development in general, and for physical security and stockpile management in particular. While various international standards and guidelines for stockpile management exist, there is no standardised and internationally recognised methodology for carrying out independent assessments and validation of compliance according to these standards.

Therefore, the European Union on 7 July 2020 adopted Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/979. This project implemented by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining ('GICHD') and its specialised agency, the Ammunition Management Advisory Team ('AMAT') aims to enhanced security and safety of SALW and ammunition stockpiles through the development of an internationally recognised system that would allow independent validation/certification of compliance by States with open international standards, on a voluntary basis, displaying their ability to address and prevent diversion and accidental explosions. A certification or validation system could also be used to inform diversion risk assessments carried out by arms supplying States within the context of arms export control, such as those outlined under Arms Trade Treaty Article 11 and criterion 7 of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP.

I thank you Mr. Chair.