



Open Ended Working Group on Ammunition

August 2022

Statement by The HALO Trust

Check Against Delivery

Thank you. I am speaking on behalf of The HALO Trust, whose mission is to protect lives and restore livelihoods of people affected by conflict. We are unable to join in person in Geneva, but it is my honour to address delegates and observers from civil society in this segment.

Supporting states with weapons and ammunition management is a central pillar of HALO's strategy. We work on ammunition destruction and management programmes in 14 countries around the world. All are fragile, conflict, and post-conflict states. In Guinea Bissau, West Africa, HALO recently completed the construction of an ammunition storage area, enabling the safe storage of ammunition away from centres of population, along with training ammunition storekeepers and managers to operate the facilities safely. In July, we also disposed of six and a half tons of old and dangerous ammunition. HALO is also in discussion with Nigerian authorities to enhance weapon storage facilities across the country.

Five years ago, a deadly unplanned explosion of a military storehouse rocked the Black Sea town of Primorsky. Thousands of bombs and ammunition were thrown over a vast area. Three people were killed and 64 injured. The fallout from the blast littered the village and surrounding land with thousands of explosives including huge aircraft bombs – posing a serious threat to local people. HALO immediately began work to make the area safe, clearing high-risk areas around homes and schools first. Since our emergency clearance operations began exactly five years ago, we have now removed 100,000 explosives and returned over three million square meters of land to the community's 6,000 residents. I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate my colleagues in country on this huge achievement; it has been a long-term undertaking at a very large scale. We thank the donors that made this life-saving work possible and enabled us to complete clearance this month.

Whilst we celebrate this huge milestone, it serves as a timely reminder that the impact of poorly stored and managed stockpiles of ammunition is devastating and that the vast majority of explosive incidents are due to poor training and management systems.

The issue of ammunition in surplus is not one that will go away on its own. Ammunition will either explode at a dramatic cost to people, infrastructure and already stressed national economies. Or it is likely to be trafficked. The impact will be felt on people, stability, economies and the environment.

Colleagues, let me reiterate that we all require increased political prioritisation of the issue of ammunition in surplus at the national, regional and international levels. It requires increased levels of cooperation and assistance based on international good practice. And it will benefit from increased involvement of the private sector as well as NGOs and governments.

We look forward to further collaboration with you all and stand ready to offer our full support.

ENDS