



PHILIPPINES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT

Delivered by

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to the United Nations in New York

Open-ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunitions -
General Exchange of Views

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Currently at 1018 words or approximately 8 minutes

Thank you, Mister/Madame Chair.

I congratulate, Mr. Albrecht von Wittke of Germany, on his election as Chair of the first OEWG on Conventional Ammunitions. I also congratulate Ambassador Maritza Chan of Costa Rica on her election as Vice Chair. You can count on the full support of the Philippines.

Mister/Madame Chair,

From 1979 to 2019, there were more than 623 unplanned explosions of ammunitions in nearly 30,000 casualties in 106 States, leading to the displacement of entire communities and disrupted livelihood.¹ From 2009 to 2021, national defense and security forces operating in 26 States recovered more than 600,000 units of diverted conventional ammunitions from criminal and terrorist groups.²

However, despite this alarming data on the safety and security risks posed by inadequately managed ammunitions, for over two decades, as earlier remarked by Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Nakamitsu, conventional ammunitions still remain the “orphan” in conventional arms control. In existing frameworks, ammunition is treated as an adjunct to weapons, so most provisions are geared towards weapons management and do not specifically address the different safety and security challenges posed by ammunitions. At present, there is

¹ Page 8 of the 2021 GGE report citing Small Arms Survey dataset on unplanned explosion at munition sites.

² Page 9 of the 2021 GGE Report citing the data collected by Conflict Arms Research (CAR) field investigation teams and publicly accessible data on iTrace.

no international comprehensive framework wholistically addressing the through-life management of conventional ammunitions.

With the 2008 and 2021 GGE paving the way, we now have GA Resolution 76/233 establishing this OEWG to elaborate on a set of political commitments as a new global framework that address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management, including international cooperation and assistance to support a safe, secure and sustainable through life management of conventional ammunitions.

As this OEWG is the first of its kind, the Philippines highlights the following points:

1. *On safety and security risks* - Diverted ammunition provides a deadly oxygen to armed violence and conflicts around the world. At the same time, ineffective management of ammunition stockpiles can result in disastrous accidental explosions that cut thousands of lives and destroy livelihood and communities. It is imperative that we give this “orphan” a comprehensive framework to support the safe, secure and sustainable through-life management of conventional ammunitions.
2. *On Through-life ammunition management (TLAM)* – We note that safety risks occur throughout the life of ammunitions and such risks are not only present in national stockpile, and therefore cannot be mitigated through stockpile-specific measures alone. From the perspective of security, potential for ammunition diversion can happen along a chain of transaction extending throughout the life of ammunition. TLAM also takes into account the inter-dependence of security measures along the supply chain, which means that a measure taken at one point in the supply chain (e.g. pre-transfer risk assessment) has the potential to diminish security risks (e.g. stockpile diversion) further along the chain. Therefore, we believe that a comprehensive TLAM approach is the most logical and practical step forward to address problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. Furthermore, to be sustainable, TLAM requires national ownership, regional cooperation, and international cooperation and assistance.
3. *On international cooperation and assistance* – States with the most severe ammunition management problems are often those least equipped in identifying and addressing them. International cooperation and assistance is needed to enable such States to identify and address problems related to conventional ammunitions. However, assistance must not be hinged on conditionalities. It should be needs-based and with tailored operationalization of standards, guidelines, best practices, taking into account existing mechanisms, and to the extent possible, build upon it.
4. *On risk prevention and mitigation* – At present, unplanned explosion and diversion are likely only discovered by “trigger events”, for example, a news of explosion or discovery of illicit ammunitions in the possession of criminals and terrorists. By the time of discovery, the harm, intended or otherwise, is already *fiat accompli*. In this regard, we support the need for surveillance measures, regular audit ammunition safety measures, full investigation of ammunition incidents, including unplanned explosions, and refine or develop risk mitigation measures accordingly.
5. *On exercise of due diligence (“know-your-client” or KYC)* – States can complement primary role of export licensing authorities in conducting diversion risk assessment by encouraging ammunition producers to exercise due diligence in verifying the identities of customers and other parties of the supply chain.

6. *On some key existing challenges* – Some key challenges to ammunitions management are: (a) the limited traceability of small caliber ammunitions; (b) lack of technical training and information processing systems required to identify, record, and analyze ammunition accurately and systematically; (c) weak regional coordination regarding monitoring and information-sharing on illicit ammunition flows (cross-border trafficking), including international information-sharing platforms. To achieve impactful results, these key challenges need to be addressed in our comprehensive framework on conventional ammunitions management.
7. *On gender* – as gender champions, in considering ammunition management throughout its life cycle, we support the use of gender analysis, to identify relevant entry points for gender mainstreaming.

Mister/Madame Chair,

Unplanned explosions at ammunition facilities can have severe humanitarian, socio-economic, public health and environmental consequences. The diversion of ammunition threatens national, regional, and international security, thereby fueling conflict and violent crime and undermining peace. These are serious threats to global, regional, and national security, and negatively impacts peace and development.

Mister/Madame Chair,

We hope that this OEWG successfully yields or at least bring us closer to a comprehensive framework enjoying universal support to address existing gaps in the through-life management of conventional ammunitions.

Thank you, Mister/Madame Chair.