



South African Statement on Agenda Item 5 (a) Matters related to conventional ammunition safety, OEWG on Conventional Ammunition

24 May 2022

Chairperson

When considering how a new global framework could address the gaps in through-life ammunition management in relation to ammunition safety, and the related risks, South Africa believes that we need to address safety matters related to aspects of production, pre-transfer, transfer, stockpiling, safeguarding, recovery, use and disposal.

In the African context some of the risks that have been identified relate to inappropriately large holdings of ammunition in relation to storage capacity, and mismatch in operational requirements; deterioration of stored ammunition over time, with a reduced shelf life due to environmental conditions; inadequate human resource capacity; inadequate storage infrastructure; and lack of prioritizing the necessary resources to reduce risk.

To enable the capacities required to address the issue of deteriorating ammunition, including in terms of human resources, information management and monitoring, as well as logistical and disposal capacity, it is vital that a global framework facilitate international cooperation and assistance to support states in their implementation efforts and to ensure needs-based and tailored operationalization of standards, guidelines and best practices, taking into account existing mechanisms.

Furthermore, we agree with the recommendation that states should strive for sustainable ammunition management as part of broader efforts to develop strong and effective institutions in accordance with the 2030 Agenda, as well as the African Union's Agenda

2063. To this end, South Africa believes that we should also consider the link between sustainable, safe and secure through-life management of ammunition and security sector governance and reform.

Chairperson

With regard to surveillance and incident investigation, we are of the view that the objective of the OEWG should be to support monitoring and enhancing the effectiveness of safety and security measures.

On the issue of disposal, South Africa believes that disposal is best addressed through destruction, and not other forms of disposal such as selling, which is not the ideal method of disposal, as surplus or obsolete ammunition could no longer be stable, thus compounding safety concerns. In this regard, we wish to highlight that the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its aspects refers to “responsible disposal”, preferably through destruction.

We also believe that when considering political commitments related to surveillance, we should consider the issue of safeguarding not only as an important security issue, but also in the context of safety with monitoring and warnings to civilian populations, especially in developing countries. In certain countries, unplanned or informal urban expansion at times result in the encroachment on and encirclement of ammunition storage facilities, where the risk to people who move through these facilities when they go about their daily lives is great.

Finally, Chairperson,

We believe that an implementation mechanism for ammunition management is essential in terms of information-sharing, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of measures and facilitating international cooperation and assistance. This aspect could be reflected in terms of establishing a way forward in the outcome of this Open-Ended Working Group.

I thank you.