

**Opening remarks by the Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional
Ammunition**

Fourth Substantive Session

Monday, 5 June 2023

Conference Room 2, UNHQ, NY

10.00am

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

(Problem)

Ineffective through-life management of conventional ammunition poses a serious risk to international peace, security, and sustainable development globally. The diversion of conventional ammunition of all types and all calibres to unauthorized recipients and illicit markets, including to organized criminal groups and terrorists contributes to the intensity and duration of armed conflict and armed violence around the world. Further, dozens of United Nations Member States have suffered unplanned explosions at munitions sites causing losses of thousands of lives, displacement of entire communities, loss of vital infrastructure, and damage to the environment.

The establishment of this OEWG is a collective recognition by all our countries that gaps exist to achieving a discernible reduction in the risks and impacts arising from the ineffective through-life management of conventional ammunition. The work of this Open-ended Working Group highlights the importance and the urgency of addressing the safety and security risks and impacts emanating from the ineffective through-life management of conventional ammunition at the global level in a comprehensive manner.

(History of the process)

As we enter together into the final stages of negotiation with this fourth and last substantive session of the OEWG, it is important to stress that the work of the group is at a stage, which I hope final, in a process at international level that started two decades ago. The two Groups of Governmental Experts in 2008 and 2020/21 informed Member States and clarified the gaps, challenges, and areas for action to ensure safe, secure and sustainable through-life management of conventional ammunition.

The 2008 GGE led to the development of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and to the establishment of the UN *SaferGuard Programme*. These measures represent substantial steps taken to better manage the safety risks posed to Member States and societies by ineffectively managed conventional ammunition stockpiles. They also provide important guidance for securing national ammunition stockpiles from diversion.

The 2020/21 GGE built upon this progress. It also confirmed that: 1) gaps continue to exist in the global effort to reduce the dual risks to safety and security stemming from ineffective conventional ammunition management; and 2) a comprehensive approach was needed to address these risks by promoting the through-life management of all types of conventional ammunition, from small-calibre ammunition to the largest conventional ammunition systems, extending from the point of manufacture, through pre-transfer, transfer, stockpiling and recovery, to their eventual use or disposal. This comprehensive approach also needs to address gaps in through-life management of conventional ammunition at all levels – global, regional, sub-regional and national. In pursuing this comprehensive approach, the 2020/21 GGE placed international cooperation and assistance at the centre of the discussion.

(Mandate and progress so far)

The mandate set forth for this Open-ended Working Group by the UN General Assembly is clear: to address existing gaps in through-life management of conventional ammunition by elaborating a set of political commitments as a new Global Framework. Following the first and second sessions of the OEWG which enabled us to review the existing gaps and begin the elaboration of commitments to fill these gaps, the third and present session provides us with the opportunity to finalize and adopt such a Global Framework. As your chair, I would like to reassure every delegation of my unflinching commitment to abide by the mandate bestowed upon us by the General Assembly.

I would like to thank all delegations for their active engagement, constructive inputs and flexibility shown throughout our informal and formal deliberations, and for enabling the progress we have achieved to date, which is now reflected in CRP1/Rev2. This paper is a result of extensive discussions held among all delegations during the first three substantive sessions, as well as during the inter-sessional process. It is my belief that this paper is a good basis for our work at this fourth substantive session.

Our deliberations this week are crucial in the fulfillment of our mandate. The draft Global Framework contained in CRP1/Rev.2 has now reached a stage where we need the *active involvement of all delegations* in an effort, to *negotiate between and among delegations* those final compromises that are necessary to arrive at the general agreement necessary to conclude our work and make recommendations to the General Assembly. This will require a *spirit of compromise* by all delegations to find generally acceptable solutions to open questions.

Our ambition should clearly be more than finding just the “*lowest common denominator*” and then declare our work finished. The urgency of the issue of both unplanned explosions and of diversion of conventional ammunition dictates that we all go to the limits of our flexibility to accommodate each others views, positions and specific situations and to find agreement on a robust and effective Global Framework that really has the potential to bring about important and measurable changes on the ground.

I would like to call on delegations to continue their active engagement by seeking compromises to close the normative ammunition gap in the international arms control architecture. For this it is vital that states do not look at the issue exclusively from their own national angle, but consider the situation of other States and regions and the relevance of a meaningful, robust and effective

global framework for promoting peace, security and sustainable development and for saving lives worldwide. Adopting an effective Global Framework that reduces the dual risks of safety and security stemming from ineffective through -life management of conventional ammunition is a win-win situation for all Member States, across all regions.

Distinguished Delegates,

I would like you all to enter our negotiations this week with this *spirit of cooperation, good will, flexibility, and compromise*, and with the readiness to work *together* with other delegations to finalize our work.