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STATEMENT BY

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

GHANA

DURING THE FOURTH SUBSTANTIVE SESSION

OF THE

OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION

5th May, 2023 (AM)
United Nations Headquarters,
New York

Mr. Chair,

1. My delegation joins others in complementing you on your transparent, inclusive, and objective approach towards the positive outcome of this Open-ended working group on conventional ammunition. We also congratulate all the other members of the Bureau on their election and assure the Bureau of our full cooperation and support.

2. Ghana fully subscribes to the statement to be delivered on behalf of the African Union Commission and aligns itself with the statement delivered by Columbia on behalf of several States. Please allow me to add a few remarks in our national capacity.

3. Ammunition security continues to pose the biggest risk in West Africa due to the threat of diversion into illicit markets, armed non-State actors, terrorist, and other unauthorized recipients. The illicit trafficking, easy access and availability of ammunition continue to fuel communal conflict and political instability and pose a threat, not only to regional and national security, but also to sustainable development. The widespread and the easy availability of ammunition also remains a major contributing factor to the alarming levels of armed violence, terrorism, violent extremism, crime, and militancy in Western Africa.

Mr. Chair,

4. Terrorism and violent extremism are emerging as a key consequence and driver of the flow of illicit ammunition flows. The persistent deterioration of security in the West and Central Sahel region of Africa has exacerbated violent extremists and terrorists' activities in the ECOWAS region and has often involved indiscriminate targeting of civilian and military populations. According to the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, the first quarter of 2022 recorded 379 terrorist attacks that resulted in over 2,824 deaths across Africa with Sahel in West Africa recording the highest number of deaths of 1641 and second highest attacks after East Africa. Other reports on the deteriorating security situation in the ECOWAS region put the death toll at close to 14,500 in four and half years and 5.5 million refugees seeking humanitarian assistance.

5. The effective control of ammunition in West Africa is, therefore, one of the major prerequisites to preventing terrorism and violent extremist from gaining grounds. It is also key to ensuring peace, sustainable development, and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in West Africa. A major lesson learned by West African States over the years is that easy access to ammunition propels armed violence and stagnates development, and these negative consequences spill over to neighboring countries.

Mr. Chair,

6. Like most West African States, Ghana has high expectations that our meeting here at the United Nations Headquarters over these few days to address challenges related to the through-life management of conventional ammunition would yield a positive outcome which addresses the aspirations of our people in West Africa.

7. This aspiration is premised on the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, that, the diversion of arms and ammunition fuels crime, terrorism, and armed violence, including gender-based violence. This Agenda stresses the fact that the ineffective management of ammunition stockpiles poses a serious threat to human security and undermines our efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals especially in developing countries.

Mr. Chair,

8. Ghana welcomes the Draft Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management as contained in A/CONF.239/2023/CRP.1/Rev.2. In our view, the current draft adequately addresses our National and Regional priorities.

9. That notwithstanding allow me Mr. Chair, to make some few comments regarding key aspects of the current draft.

10. Firstly, Small Arms and Light Weapons ammunition (Small calibre ammunition) are the calibres of choice in crimes and insurgencies conducted by illicit armed non-state actors across West Africa. We therefore support the explicit reference to all types of conventional ammunition, from small-calibre ammunition to the largest conventional ammunition systems throughout the document particularly in paragraph 1 and 10.

11. Secondly, for international assistance and cooperation to be truly effective, national, and regional ownership through multi-year, equitable partnerships need to be strengthened. Because vastly different skill levels and available resources exist in multiple States. Priority therefore should be given to practical, tangible, low-cost and high-impact activities. Ghana therefore reiterates our call for an adaptable, flexible, and tailored approach that respond to States priorities is essential.

12. Thirdly, we share in the view that the cost for the marking of ammunition must be borne by manufacturers given the high cost associated with marking.

13. Fourthly, we welcome the inclusion of the Annexes in the Global Framework, as they provide important information and context for the 15 objectives outlined. We, therefore, recommend keeping the Annexes to the current draft Document.

14. Finally, regarding the objectives stated within the Draft Outcome Document, we believe, that Objective 8 and its stated measures are applicable and well-defined to promote supply chain transparency and to reduce diversion risks.

Mr. Chair

15. **In conclusion** the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel has compelled respective governments in West Africa including Ghana to place greater emphasis on controlling the possession, trafficking, and proliferation of ammunition. This Global Framework would therefore support efforts by Ghana and other States in the West African sub-region to respond to emerging regional security threats particularly terrorism and violent extremism, through the implementation of identified priority activities to combat the illicit diversion and trafficking of ammunition and Improvised Explosive Devices components.

I thank you.