

Statement by The HALO Trust
6/8/2023

As a representative of The HALO Trust, it is my honor to speak to you today.

I would first like to thank Mr. Chair and express my gratitude to all that have provided their leadership on this critical issue.

HALO's mission is to protect lives and restore livelihoods of people affected by conflict. And it is not possible to achieve this objective while families across the world are vulnerable to unplanned ammunition depot explosions and while weapons and ammunition remain susceptible to diversion to extremist organizations.

Therefore, in 14 countries, and soon more, HALO is partnering with national and local authorities, as well as UN institutes and regional organizations, providing assistance in weapons and ammunition security management.

This work is critical to supporting many of the objectives outlined in the framework under discussion, while employing a locally-led approach in which assistance is driven by needs identified by the host country, and ensuring best practices in the delivery of training in weapon and ammunition lifecycle management.

As we know, unplanned explosions at ammunition sites, which number in the hundreds, if not thousands, continue to kill and harm civilians year on year - causing more than 30,000 casualties since 1979, as reported by the Small Arms Survey.

We must not forget the tragic detonation of explosive precursors in Beirut that caused incalculable damage economically, politically, and extraordinary harm – physically and psychologically – to so many innocent men, women, and children. And while this incident made international headlines, too many similar explosions, of ammunition stockpiles and other explosive hazards, have caused enormous damage with little attention.

And of course, the challenges associated with managing the tides of weapons and ammunition that flood countries during times of conflict result in stockpiles that can easily be targeted by unauthorized recipients, fueling violence that can destabilize entire regions.

From West Africa to Central America, from East Africa to the Europe, more must be done to support conventional ammunitions security overall, and ensure that the perspectives and experiences of women, who are often underrepresented in the security sector, are incorporated into these efforts.

We are grateful for the efforts of this working group in continuing to highlight these pressing challenges, as well as the development of this framework. We would encourage member states to increase cooperation and assistance in this area, and look forward to lending our support to ensure lives can be saved.