

# Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

**Matters relevant to problems arising from the accumulation  
of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, taking into  
account the exchanges in the open, informal consultations  
held in 2018 and 2019**

## **Overview of the key considerations of the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/55**

**Paper submitted on behalf of the Chair<sup>1</sup>**

### **I. Overview of proceedings**

1. Pursuant to the request of the General Assembly contained in its resolution 72/55, entitled “Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus”, adopted by consensus in 2017, the Secretary-General established the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus in 2020. In accordance with the request of the Assembly, the Group has considered matters relevant to problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, taking into account the exchanges in the open, informal consultations held in 2018 and 2019.<sup>2</sup> The report of the Group is expected to be transmitted to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session.

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\* GGE/PACAS/2020/1/Rev.1.

<sup>1</sup> The present paper does not necessarily represent the views of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/55. It is a summary of discussions and considerations from the perspective of the Chair and, therefore, it is written under the Chair’s responsibility only.

<sup>2</sup> See the informal non-paper presented by Germany on the informal consultative process pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/55. Available at <https://unoda-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Informal-Non-Paper-presented-by-Germany-on-consultative-process-pursuant-to-GA-Res-72-55.pdf>.



2. In support of preparations for the Group's discussions and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/55, Germany convened a series of open, informal consultations to explore the multidimensional challenges posed by the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, with a particular focus on the dual challenges of unplanned explosions at munition sites and the diversion of ammunition to unauthorized recipients. Six informal consultations were convened at United Nations Headquarters, in February, March and October 2018 and in February, May and September 2019. The informal consultative process was further aided by a series of thematic seminars organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) during the same period to frame key issues and inform processes pertinent to the management of conventional ammunition. The seminars were aimed at facilitating dialogue and generating ideas with a view to making progress at the national, regional and global levels.<sup>3</sup>

3. The Group held its first session at United Nations Headquarters from 20 to 24 January 2020. Its proceedings were opened by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, who recalled the commitment of the Secretary-General to supporting State and regional action on excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles, in line with action 22 of his disarmament agenda, entitled *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*.

4. At its first session, the Group unanimously elected its Chair, Marcus Bleinroth (Germany), adopted its agenda, took note of its indicative timetable and considered its working methods. In line with past practice, the Group decided to operate by consensus and welcomed presentations from external experts on topics of particular relevance to its work. Drawing upon the topics arising from the informal consultations convened by Germany throughout 2018 and 2019, as well as supporting discussions at the regional and subregional levels, experts initiated comprehensive considerations of both the safety and security aspects of conventional ammunition management. The Group undertook discussions to frame key issues, including an understanding of existing processes relevant to conventional ammunition management, with a view to determining where further progress could be made.

5. In the light of the challenges posed by the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), members of the Group in a position to do so participated in informal, virtual discussions from 20 to 24 April 2020 via the United Nations videoconferencing platform, in lieu of the formal session planned to be held in Geneva, with a view to maintaining momentum and continuing work towards a final report. The informal, virtual sessions proved useful in advancing discussions in line with the mandate of the Group and with a view to formulating specific recommendations for further consideration by the General Assembly. The virtual discussions were focused on a paper prepared by the Chair, in which he outlined key areas of broad agreement based on exchanges during the first session, including elements related to conventional ammunition management and key safety and security risks. The Chair also presented a paper for consideration, in which he outlined a possible approach to a multilayer framework dedicated to conventional ammunition management.

6. In support of the work of the Group, the experts were invited to submit working papers on issues of particular pertinence to the deliberations. In that regard, several working papers were submitted by experts, including on the sustainability of

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Furthermore, reports of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) seminar series are available in English, Spanish and French on the UNIDIR website and provide a comprehensive overview of key findings and discussions (see [www.unidir.org/publications](http://www.unidir.org/publications)).

cooperation and assistance in the safe and secure management of ammunition.<sup>4</sup> In other working papers, regional and national priorities were addressed in the context of the Group's mandate and General Assembly resolution 72/55.<sup>5</sup> The Chair prepared two substantive working papers, at the request of the experts, to support the Group's consideration of key issues that arose from discussions during the first session, namely diversion typology (GGE/PACAS/2020/3) and existing frameworks applicable to conventional ammunition management (GGE/PACAS/2020/4). In advance of the Group's first session, the Secretariat prepared an overview paper on the history of the issue of conventional ammunition under the auspices of the United Nations (GGE/PACAS/2020/2).

7. Without prejudice to any future and final decisions of the Group, the below elements represent key considerations to date in its work. These areas of broad understanding are summarized with a view to offering all Member States a sense of the deliberations, in preparation for further discussion by the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, in accordance with its resolution 74/65.

## II. Consideration of problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus

8. In line with its mandate, the Group has closely considered the issue of surplus ammunition. It has noted that ineffectively managed ammunition stockpiles often contribute to a growth in surplus ammunition and, furthermore, that the management weaknesses that contribute to their growth usually apply throughout the national stockpile and not only the surplus portion. This is particularly pronounced in conflict and post-conflict settings in which States are often confronted with a multitude of challenges, various demands on prioritization and a lack of institutional capacity.

9. The Group has noted the conclusion of its predecessor, the 2008 Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, that ineffective physical security and stockpile management contributes to the following issues of international concern: (a) the stockpiling of unserviceable ammunition, which poses an explosive risk to national infrastructure, civilian populations and the environment; and (b) diversion from inadequately secured stockpiles, which provides ammunition to criminal, insurgent and terrorist groups and other unauthorized non-State actors (see A/63/182).

10. The Group has also considered how the safety and security problems associated with conventional ammunition extend beyond national stockpile facilities, insofar as such challenges exist throughout the life cycle of the ammunition, from the point of manufacture until disposal or use.

<sup>4</sup> See the working paper submitted by Austria, Montenegro and Switzerland, entitled "Sustainability of cooperation and assistance in the safe and secure management of ammunition". Available at <https://unoda-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/GGE-Working-paper-Sustainable-Cooperation-and-Assistance-Switzerland-Austria-Montenegro-January-20201.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See the working paper submitted by Mexico, entitled "Input to the process derived from UNGA resolution 72/55"; and the working paper submitted by Ghana, entitled "Towards the Group of Governmental Experts Meeting on Ammunition: Priorities for ECOWAS Member Countries". Available at <https://unoda-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/MEX-Input-on-resolution-72-55-ammunition.pdf> and <https://unoda-web.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/GGE.Ghana-working-paper-11.pdf>, respectively.

### **III. Through-life management and supply-chain security approaches**

11. The Group has noted that, in order to effectively discharge its mandate, it needed to consider safety and security risks comprehensively. In that regard, it has referred to the preambular paragraphs of General Assembly resolution [72/55](#), in which the risks posed by unplanned explosions and diversion are highlighted.

12. The Group has emphasized the importance of addressing security-related challenges associated with conventional ammunition in both conflict-affected and non-conflict settings, in particular the challenges posed by diversion. It has placed emphasis on security matters, with a view to complementing the progress already made in the area of safety, in particular with the development of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines.

13. In order to structure its discussions, analysis and recommendations on both safety and security aspects, the Group has considered a conceptualization of ammunition management that addresses both safety risks according to a through-life ammunition management approach and security risks that may arise anywhere along the ammunition supply chain.

14. Addressing each set of risks has assisted the Group in considering the many reinforcing measures that should be considered at different stages throughout the life of conventional ammunition, or at various points along the supply chain.

### **IV. Consideration of existing frameworks that address ammunition**

15. The Group has noted that, as part of the informal consultations convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/55](#), there have been substantive exchanges on the treatment of conventional ammunition under existing frameworks. In addition to the informal consultations, the seminars convened by UNIDIR offered opportunities to address the applicability of existing frameworks.<sup>6</sup>

16. The Group has discussed the fact that, although ammunition-related provisions do exist in various international, regional and subregional frameworks, such provisions are limited, not only in their material scope, applicability throughout the whole life of ammunition and geographical coverage, but also with regard to membership (see [GGE/PACAS/2020/4](#)). The Group has noted that conventional ammunition is not subject to any multilateral, comprehensive framework, whether politically or legally binding, to address matters relevant to the effective, safe and secure management of conventional ammunition, including supply chain security, stockpile management and diversion monitoring.

17. The Group, which itself has achieved gender parity, has considered the link between gender and ammunition management. It has also noted the recognition by the General Assembly, in its resolution [74/65](#), of the need to encourage the full involvement of both women and men in ammunition management policy and practice.

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<sup>6</sup> UNIDIR, “Key issues and processes pertinent to the management of conventional ammunition: report of the third thematic seminar”, 2019.

## **V. Multilayer comprehensive ammunition management framework**

18. The Group continues to consider how a possible comprehensive framework for conventional ammunition management may be structured to provide maximum benefit to the international community. The Group has also considered the possibility of operational guidelines on supply chain security and diversion monitoring. It has underscored international cooperation and assistance as central to the issue of conventional ammunition generally, as well as to the implementation of any such framework.

19. In the context of the possibility of a comprehensive framework dedicated to conventional ammunition, the Group has discussed various existing frameworks and processes that could support safe, secure and sustainable ammunition management. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda have been noted as useful reference frameworks when promoting ammunition safety and security. The Group has also considered how relevant ammunition management programming may be integrated into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

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