Excellency,

I have the honor of writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/233, to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management.

At the organizational session which took place from 7 to 8 February, the OEWG adopted the provisional agenda and the provisional programme of work for the first substantive session, as orally revised. The Group also informally expressed its willingness to agree to the switch in location of the second 2022 substantive session from New York to Geneva and of the 2023 substantive session from Geneva to New York, should an appropriate date for the second session be found in Geneva. I am working with the Secretariat to find such alternative suitable dates for the second substantive session of the OEWG and will keep you informed. Once such alternative suitable dates have been identified, the switch in location would need to be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration and formal adoption.

You will recall that under Agenda Item 3 “Organisation of Work”, we discussed but were not able to agree on the rules of procedure to govern the work of the OEWG in place of the rules relating to the procedure of committees of the General Assembly currently governing our work according to rule 161 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly. The following two days, I engaged in intense informal consultations with concerned delegations to find a consensus solution to this issue. On the basis of our discussion during the organizational session and these informal consultations, I am pleased to report that progress was made in narrowing the divergences among delegations on my proposal for the application, mutatis mutandis, of the rules of procedure of the United
Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects held in 2001, as contained in document A/CONF.192/16, to the work of the OEWG.

Commending the concerned delegations for the flexibility they have demonstrated throughout, I wish to place under a silence procedure, a decision to apply, mutatis mutandis, the rules of procedure of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects held in 2001, as contained in document A/CONF.192/16. The silence procedure will expire on 14 March 2022 at 1200 Noon (New York time). If any Member State is compelled to break silence, it may do so via email communication to the Chair (chair-oewg-ammunition@diplom.de) and copied to the Secretariat (conventionalarms-unoda@un.org) before the stipulated date and time, i.e. no later than 1200 Noon (New York time) on 14 March 2022.

If the silence on the proposal to apply, mutatis mutandis, the rules of procedure of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is not broken, rule 63 concerning the participation of non-governmental organizations will be applied in the manner outlined below, taking into account the following understandings that I was able to reach during my consultations:

Modalities regarding the application of rule 63 concerning non-governmental organizations for the purposes of the Open-Ended Working Group established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/233

1. All open formal sessions of the OEWG will be broadcasted through the UN Web TV.

2. Observers. NGOs with ECOSOC Consultative Status are granted an observer status in the OEWG open sessions. According to rule 63 b, other interested non-governmental organizations relevant and competent to the scope and purpose of the OEWG can submit a written accreditation request with information on the organization’s purpose, programmes and activities in areas relevant to the scope of the group. The Chair will subsequently provide Member States, through the Secretariat, with a list of relevant NGOs for consideration on a no-objection basis.

3. To achieve meaningful participation of accredited NGOs, a half-day dedicated informal meeting with NGOs will be convened during the timeframe of the first substantive session. At the discretion of the Chair, one additional
informal meeting with accredited NGOs could be convened in each of the subsequent sessions of the OEWG, if needed.

4. Accredited NGOs are invited to make written contributions to be published on the OEWG website.

5. In addition, the Chair may decide to convene informal meetings with accredited NGOs during the intersessional period as needed.

In addition, in accordance with past practice at his discretion, the Chair may wish to invite briefers on subject matters directly relevant to the mandate of the OEWG to present their views to the Group. These briefings will be conducted in an informal setting.

Unless silence is broken, I will proceed with the preparations for the first substantive session on the basis of this proposal, including by submitting a revised draft provisional programme of work for the first substantive session to be held in May, that will reflect the dedicated informal meeting with NGOs mentioned under paragraph 3 above. The decision regarding the rules of procedure, as outlined above, will be formally adopted during the first substantive session of the OEWG in May 2022, where the above understandings regarding the application of rule 63 and expert briefings will be read out for the formal record of the OEWG.

It is my sincere hope that all Member States will consider this proposal in a spirit of flexibility and mutual understanding.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Albrecht von Wittke
Chair
Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition

All Permanent Missions to the United Nations
New York