Chair’s Main Takeaways from the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition First Substantive Session, 23 – 27 May 2022

As we conclude the first session of the Open-Ended Working Group, I wanted to provide you a sense of what I will take away from this meeting.

First and foremost is the degree of positive energy in this room and in this Working Group, which makes the work of the Chair and his ’s team that much easier, and for which I would like to thank all of you.

Second, on issues of substance, I have heard in many of your national statements and interventions robust support for a new global framework on conventional ammunition.

I sense a general agreement that ammunition has often been neglected and that coordinated international action at different levels – global, regional, sub-regional and national - to address the safety and security of ammunition is a win-win situation. In addition, many States expressed concerns around the diversion of conventional ammunition to unauthorized users’ that fuels conflict, terrorism, and crime. Concerns over unplanned explosions at munition sites were also noted as a factor that hinders sustainable development prospects—negatively impacting infrastructure, civilian populations, and the environment.

In response to this, I have also taken note of your many references to ensuring safety and security at all stages of ‘through-life ammunition management.’ This suggests to me that we have a shared understanding of how the chain of conventional ammunition safety and security measures is only as strong as its weakest link—hence a need for comprehensive approaches.

A third and fundamental current of thinking that I hear after having listened to you is ‘flexibility.’ Elements of a global framework must have the necessary flexibility to allow them to achieve the same broad objectives and results, but under circumstances that often differ very greatly—whether at national, sub-regional, or regional levels.

Many of you, in your national statements, were careful to describe the ‘rationale’ or ‘logic’ behind conventional ammunition safety and security measures adopted in your own countries. This indicates to me that there are multiple paths towards achieving the same objectives. In this respect, I see benefit in stating, in quite comprehensive terms, the ‘rationale’ behind any measure or commitment to be agreed by the Open-Ended Working Group.

Clearly stating the rationale behind any measure or commitment to be agreed by the Open-Ended Working Group would, I believe, also aid our discussions on international cooperation and assistance, an issue that many delegations expressed as an essential component to the work of this Open-ended Working Group. Presenting measures and commitments more discursively could, I feel, prompt more realistic, robust, needs-driven, locally relevant, and sustainable international cooperation and assistance.

I would also wish to acknowledge the foundational principles that many of you have noted in your statements and interventions and that facilitate/enable States to cooperate with each other at different geographical levels and to jointly engage on strengthening the safety and security of conventional ammunition in a comprehensive approach that many of you have noted in your statements and interventions.
Finally, I note that many of you have raised the key issue of actions taken at regional and sub-regional levels. We must ensure that any consideration of a global framework should build upon, complement and strengthen existing mechanisms, whilst also drawing valuable lessons learned from them in our deliberations.

With your agreement, my team and I will take your valuable contributions this week and work them into a draft structure for the “political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management, including international cooperation and assistance” to enable us to consider them systematically in the intersessional period and second substantive session in August.