Open Ended Working Group on Ammunition
May 2022

Statement by The HALO Trust
Check Against Delivery

Thank you. I am speaking on behalf of The HALO Trust, whose mission is to protect lives and restore livelihoods of people affected by conflict. We are unable to join in person in New York, but it is my honour to address delegates and observers from civil society in this segment.

You may know HALO for its work on landmines, unexploded ordnance and IEDs. But supporting states with weapons and ammunition management is also a central pillar of HALO’s strategy. We work on the ammunition destruction and management programmes in 14 countries around the world. All are fragile, conflict, and post-conflict states.

We should all now be familiar with the impact of poorly stored and managed stockpiles of ammunition, from Brazzaville to Beirut. The incidents of unplanned explosions are in their hundreds, if not thousands. And they are going up. The vast majority of explosive incidents are due to poor training and management systems.

There is no debate that this is both a security and disarmament issue. 85% of the IEDs in Libya were sourced from government ammunition storage areas. But addressing ammunition in surplus is also a human security priority.

Colleagues, the issue of ammunition in surplus is not one that will go away on its own. Ammunition will either blow up at a dramatic cost to people, infrastructure and already stressed national economies. Or it will go missing, more than likely to fuel conflict and instability. Again, the impact will be felt on people, stability, economies and the environment.

The ‘least worst option’ is that it will sit there as a disaster waiting to happen. So we congratulate everyone involved, but particularly Germany, on steering multilateral engagement on ammunition to this point. But call for greater priority to address ammunition.

This requires increased political prioritisation of the issue at the national, regional and international levels. It requires increased levels of cooperation and assistance based on international good practice. And it will benefit from increased involvement of the private sector as well as NGOs and governments.

We look forward to working with states and stakeholders in this open ended working group and stand ready to offer our full support.

ENDS