

**OSCE statement at the Open-ended Working Group on Conventional  
Ammunition**

Wednesday, 25 May 2022, 10.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.

Distinguished Chairperson,

Esteemed Delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) acknowledges the substantive report and keenly follows the progress made under the auspices of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

The OSCE attributes great importance to the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of ammunition safety, and security risks both on the side of unplanned explosions, as well as on the side of diversion. The OSCE participating States recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to ammunition management in particular through life cycle management approach as well as international cooperation and assistance. That is why they reached a consensus on the adoption of the OSCE DOCUMENT ON STOCKPILES OF CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION back on 19 November 2003. With this comprehensive and far-reaching normative framework, participating States created a solid normative framework and a vibrant practical assistance mechanism.

Notwithstanding this rather favorable and active position the OSCE follows carefully the progress made by the GGE, recognizing the opportunities for further much needed normative and regulatory developments this process could yield at

the global level. This being said, I would like to outline the specific perspective, experience and the nature of the OSCE in relation to conventional ammunition.

Over the course of the last 20 years OSCE generated various experiences in implementing a comprehensive set of norms, principles to address concerns and challenges posed by the presence of stockpiles of conventional ammunition, explosive material and detonating devices in surplus and/or awaiting destruction in some States in the OSCE area. Such an approach is possible since the Document on SCA is operationalized through two distinct but mutually reinforcing elements: the OSCE Handbook of Best Practices on Conventional Ammunition (CA) and the OSCE Assistance Mechanism.

The OSCE best practice guides on conventional ammunition developed in the early 2000's reflect the common understanding of the 57 participating States on most important stages of the life cycle of ammunition. Since 2020, these documents have been undergoing reviews and updates, while consultations are ongoing about the development of new ones. In fact, the OSCE participating States have been further engaged in informal and formal dialogue processes on combatting illicit trafficking of SALW and CA in the OSCE area, advancement of the assistance mechanism, as well as defining national ownership and capacity development through development of reference guides. These aim to provide strategic guidance to the processes, and actions in the subject matter. Additionally, in February 2022, Switzerland and Austria, proposed a Food for Thought Paper on further operationalization of the OSCE document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (SCA) through the development of an OSCE Plan of Action on SCA.

Deeply rooted in this normative foundation is the OSCE assistance mechanism – practical and tangible part of our work. OSCE Document on SCA envisages a

formal procedure where each one of the participating States can request assistance in advancing SCA security and control by encouraging all other participating States to evaluate the validity, scope and size of such request, and based on their individual and collective assessment decide which resources they would like to contribute in response. Participating States are able to allocate any, or a combination, of the following three forms of assistance: pledges of financial resources, they are able to second experts and specialists to support the project, as well as to avail their education and training capacities in support of the project activities. Practical assistance projects made a qualitative shift in terms of the implementation of the OSCE normative framework. This mechanism envisages direct support to participating States in meeting the commitments, and improving communication and confidence between participating States that either receive or provide assistance. It is interesting to note that over the course of the last twenty years the nature and type of stakeholders engaged expanded from traditional defense and security beneficiaries to also include also the law-enforcement actors.

The OSCE approach to addressing SCA-related problems determined and implemented through (a) life cycle approach to CA, (b) integrating SCA management and control issues in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, and (c) combatting illicit trafficking and uncontrolled spread of CA. These approaches do overlay in several distinct aspects since they are mutually reinforcing with the overarching purpose to build confidence, security and transparency.

Before I conclude, allow me to share few questions that the OSCE Secretariat believes would be useful for further progress in thinking of both normative and practical assistance opportunities in the field of SCA. I would express them in the form of six questions relevant for the proposed global framework on CA:

- (1) How can the concept of through-life ammunition management be furthered, and subsequently operationalized?
- (2) How can the concepts of conflict cycle, and diversion, or better yet combatting illicit trafficking, in all its aspects be better defined and integrated in such framework?
- (3) How can we develop, strengthen, and maintain an effective system of both norms and practices, through the ‘whole-of-government’ approach to CA control and management?
- (4) How can the implementation of the proposed framework be reviewed and confirmed through international reporting, verification, monitoring and other measures, and enhanced through assistance projects?
- (5) How can international community contribute to legislative and regulatory framework for CA control system on a national level that is compliant with international agreements and a good practice of periodic reviews?
- (6) How can regional organization be best included in the process of the OEWG, not only as potential implementers of the proposed framework, but also as contributors to its development?

In conclusion, on behalf of the OSCE Secretariat I would like to thank the Chair of the OEWG for including us in the Wilton Park dialogue: United Nations multilateral process on conventional ammunition organized in the period of 9-11 May 2022 where we had the opportunity to share our perspective in a bit more detail. As ever, the OSCE stands ready to contribute twenty years of our normative and practical experience to the process of OEWG on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

I thank you for your attention.