Open-ended Working Group – Conventional Ammunition  
Statement – Department of Public Security of the Organization of American States  
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Hybrid format – Wednesday, May 25th, 10 am to 12 pm

Thank you and good morning, Mr. Chair.

Good morning to all the distinguished representatives of the United Nations Member States, regional and international organizations, and civil society present at this informal meeting. On behalf of the Organization of American States, we would like to thank the chair and UNODA for the invitation and for the opportunity to share our perspective on the issue of conventional ammunition, which is of the utmost importance to the Americas.

Unfortunately, the region has the highest regional rate of homicides in the world, with 17.2 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, according to the latest Global Study on Homicides of UNODC. Almost 75% of them were committed with the use of a firearm, illustrating the direct link between the availability of firearms and the high levels of armed violence.

The proliferation of ammunition is another point of concern, contributing to the problem. Ammunition poses a threat from several angles. The illegal assembly of ammunition or the diversion to the illicit market feeds organized crime groups and the violence generated by them. In addition, several countries in the region do not systematically implement stockpile management protocols, increasing the risk of unplanned explosions in storage facilities. In the past years, there has been at least one explosion reported in the region per year, with several injuries and casualties.

This context has led the region to be a pioneer in the agenda of firearms and ammunition control with the signing of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacture of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Material (CIFTA) in 1997, the first binding agreement of its kind.

Through CIFTA, 31 of the 34 OAS Member States have legally committed to a series of obligations that can advance ammunition management in different aspects of its lifecycle, including:

a. Criminalization of conducts related to the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms and their ammunition
b. Strengthening of physical security and stockpile management practices
c. Improvement of border controls and creation of licensing systems to control the export and import of ammunition
d. Cooperation and exchange of information
The issue of ammunition control is also increasing occupying the agenda of the CIFTA political meetings and is reflected in the declarations and Course of Actions approved, which evidences the importance in the agenda of the countries. However, CIFTA only covers the ammunition for small arms and light weapons, the main concern in the region, which leaves other types of conventional ammunition out of the scope of CIFTA.

We also work to support the authorities in implementing CIFTA and we witness the importance of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) to promote safer practices related to ammunition. On ammunition control, since 2019, with funding from the European Union, we have assisted 6 countries in the destruction of more than 37 tons of expired, in excess, or seized ammunition. We have also assessed the conditions of institutional stockpiles and made improvements to the security of storage areas in six countries. The IATGs are a key tool in our assessments to determine the needs and improvements necessary in stockpile facilities. They were also included in the PSSM training offered to more than 300 national personnel from 18 countries.

This experience shows we still need to continue disseminating the IATGs and promoting their implementation. It also highlights the need to complement this frame of reference for ammunition control to include aspects beyond safety standards. Considering the growing sophistication of organized crime groups and the high levels of armed violence, from an Inter-American perspective, ammunition management should also incorporate security aspects that can prevent the diversion of ammunition and reduce the damage caused by firearms. After all, without ammunition, firearms would have little usefulness.

In that regard, we congratulate the United Nations for establishing the open-ended working group on ammunition control and we are looking forward to the results of this process. It would be extremely beneficial to have a global framework for ammunition control that considers all the different stages of the chain supply, from pre-manufacture to use or disposal.

We are also very pleased to see the OEWG recognizes the importance of the regional level as a complementary layer between global standards and their operationalization at the local level. As mentioned, the CIFTA Convention covers a range of areas of through-life management of ammunition that can be considered by this process, with the proper inclusion of other types of ammunition not covered in the convention. Hence, it is fundamental the OEWG considers these other instruments during its work.

We will continue working in collaboration to implement the commitments that result from it. We wish the delegations the best of luck in this endeavor and we remain available to cooperate on it.

Thank you.