Distinguished colleagues,

Ineffective conventional ammunition management is a growing concern for the international community. On the one hand, unplanned explosions of ammunition severely affect civilian populations, infrastructure, and the environment. On the other hand — and much more damaging — ammunition diverted to unauthorised users, including criminal and terrorist groups, facilitates, fuels, and accelerates armed conflict and armed violence. Because of the complementary nature of conventional arms and conventional ammunition, it is obvious to me that national, regional, and international efforts to establish effective control over conventional arms will yield full results only when such controls are also extended to ammunition. Critical gaps, however, remain.

As we collectively work in this OEWG process, and as we reflect inter alia on the findings of the 2020-21 Group of Governmental Experts on Conventional Ammunition, it is important to stress that this is only the latest stage in a process at international level that began in the mid-2000s.

Starting with the 2008 GGE on conventional ammunition in surplus, we have seen growing international attention to the problems associated with conventional ammunition. By conventional ammunition, we mean not just ammunition for small arms and light weapons but also far larger munitions, such as for artillery systems. These larger munitions, when ineffectively managed, pose much more of an explosive threat to national infrastructure and civilian populations than small-calibre ammunition. But also their risk of diversion should not be underestimated, even if it were only as a source for explosive material.

The 2008 GGE led to the development of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and to the establishment of the UN SaferGuard Programme. These measures represent substantial steps taken to better manage the safety risks posed to states and societies by ineffectively managed ammunition stockpiles. They also provide important guidance for securing national ammunition stockpiles from diversion.

But it has become increasingly clear that ammunition is also subject to diversion throughout its life, from the time of its production to the time of its eventual use or disposal. As recent crises demonstrate, ineffectively secured ammunition is in high demand among criminal and terrorist groups — and in the latter case, particularly for the purposes of manufacturing improvised explosive devices (IED).
I am confident that the goal of more effectively managing conventional ammunition at every level will result in a win-win situation for all parties concerned.

This is why Germany, in 2017, took the initiative to call for a second UN Group of Governmental Experts to address the challenges posed by ammunition management in a more comprehensive manner. The GGE was agreed by the UN General Assembly by consensus with resolution 72/55. The GGE was composed of 18 members and worked in 2020 and 2021 despite the challenges of the COVID crisis. It finished its work in September 2021 with a consensus report.

The composition of the group well-reflected the different regional groups and the highly diverse views among UN member states on the issue. Nevertheless, and in spite of the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Group built a high degree of cohesion. This allowed the Group to consider even the most controversial issues in a depoliticized and constructive atmosphere and to develop forward looking proposals in its 33-page report.

Let me summarize the main recommendations of the GGE report:

The key recommendation is to establish a new multilayer “Comprehensive Framework on conventional ammunition” at UN level as the overarching policy instrument which could bring together actions on the national, sub-regional, regional and global level. Within this framework, a set of political commitments as “a new global framework” should be negotiated under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. These political commitments should address the aspects of through-life ammunition management from the point of production until disposal or use relating to both safety (i.e. the risk of explosion of ammunition, including stockpile management) and security (i.e. the risk of diversion, proliferation, and misuse).

These commitments could allow for regions and/or subregions, and the Member States within them, to voluntarily translate the global level commitments and measures into legally binding instruments and/or tailored commitments determined by each region or subregion.

According to the GGE, the set of political commitments as a new global framework, i.e. the global layer of the multi-layered framework should

- On one hand, identify and promote relevant safety and security measures to be applied at specific stages of the through-life management of ammunition: production, pre-transfer, transfer, stockpile, recovery, use and disposal. To guide States on this matter, the GGE report already identified 14 specific “technical micro-recommendations” to reduce safety risks and 20 specific “technical micro-recommendations” to reduce security risks.
- On the other hand, identify and promote measures that are designed to monitor and enhance the effectiveness at all stages of the through-life management of ammunition, including:
  - surveillance and incident investigations and record keeping (on the safety-side),
o investigation and analysis of diverted ammunition and international cooperation in investigations to address diversion (on the security side).

The GGE recommended that the political commitments would be complemented by an implementation mechanism at the global level composed of the following elements:

1. Facilitation of international cooperation and assistance to support states in their implementation efforts and to ensure needs-based and tailored operationalization of standards, guidelines and best practices,

2. Development of voluntary operational guidelines related to security aspects of the through-life management of ammunition under the auspices of the United Nations (supply chain technical guidelines (SCTG) for the security side to complement the already existing International Ammunition Technical Guidelines IAGT for the safety side.

3. Supporting of the voluntary adoption at the national, regional and subregional levels of targets and/or indicators and identify opportunities to support information exchange among States,

4. Development of an online repository of regional, subregional and national political commitments

5. Facilitation of participation in regular meetings of States to follow up and exchange information on implementation efforts.

At the national level, the report recommends addressing ammunition management in a comprehensive and sustainable manner by developing legal and regulatory frameworks and to undertake projects and programs that effectively address safe and secure through-life ammunition management from the point of manufacture until its disposal. States should develop national systems to monitor and prevent diversion. These systems could include ammunition identification, profiling, tracing and analysis, data collection and record-keeping mechanisms, information-sharing and exchange mechanism, knowledge generation and capacity-building, export controls, import controls and post-delivery assurances.

The GGE report was welcomed in the Fall last year by UNGA resolution 76/233, that also established the OEWG.

The 2020-21 GGE has identified some key ingredients for international action on ammunition, rather than defining any fixed recipe for action. That recipe for action is the task of the Open-Ended Working Group.

The OEWG has been mandated by the General Assembly with the important task of addressing existing gaps in through-life management of conventional ammunition and elaborating a set of political commitments as a new global framework.
Importantly, the 2021 GA Resolution which mandates the OEWG, speaks of “a comprehensive framework” to support safe, secure, and sustainable ammunition management at the national, subregional, regional, and global levels. The word “comprehensive” here, suggests that such a framework should address at all geographical levels the through-life management of ammunition—not just to tackle safety issues, but also to address ammunition diversion along the full supply chain.

So the “global framework” that the OEWG is working on is just one layer of the multi-layered “comprehensive framework”.

The OEWG started its work with an in-person organisational session in New York at UN Headquarters in February 2022 that tackled the usual organisational issues, including election of the chair, adoption of an agenda and a Programme of work as well as rules of procedure. Through intense consultations during and after the organisational session, a compromise could be reached to apply, mutatis mutandis the rules of Procedure of the UN PoA on SALW accompanied by a common understanding on the exact modalities of NGO participation.

This allowed in turn for the first substantive session to go ahead at the End of May in a very smooth and orderly fashion. The main purpose of that session was on the one hand to familiarize delegations with the issues at hand according to the OEWGs mandate and on the other hand provided an opportunity for delegations to share their views on these issues and on the GGE report and its recommendations.

My Chairs main takeaways from that first substantive session were the following:

- on issues of substance, I heard in many of the national statements and interventions robust support for a new global framework on conventional ammunition.
- I sensed 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 also took note of many references to ensuring safety and security at all stages of ‘through-life ammunition management.’ This suggests to me that the OEWG has 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 was ‘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.

- In their national statements, many delegations were careful to describe the ‘rationale’ or ‘logic’ behind conventional ammunition safety and security measures adopted in their own countries. This indicated 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 the OEWG 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 also wish to acknowledge the foundational principles that many delegations 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 noted in their statements and interventions.

- Finally, many 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.

Distinguished colleagues,
I want to thank you once again for the opportunity to brief you today and for the contributions of your countries to the debate.

What is important is that you make your voices heard in the OEWG process. We – my team and I - aim at including all states into the process and to include your views as best as possible. Especially your expertise and experiences in the field and in your Region and subregions and are of vital importance to produce an effective and meaningful “global framework on safe, secure and sustainable through-life ammunition management”.

My team and I have been working the valuable contributions from this first substantial session, including the ones from your region, 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.
This draft structure has been the object of two rounds of informal consultations, and I feel we are in a good place right now, with a sufficient degree of convergence on the draft structure to start developing draft substantive elements for the outcome document.

Our time during the remaining two substantive sessions with a total of ten working days is very precious, and we need to make the best of the intersessional process to prepare for those substantive sessions, the next one being from 15 to 19 August this year in Geneva, as just formally decided by the General Assembly last week.

I therefore invite all of you, to make written contributions – on the basis of the draft structure discussed so far – to enable me and my team to develop these draft substantive elements for the outcome document. You can submit your input – be it in the form of working papers or other national, subregional or regional contributions - to the Secretariat at conventionalarms-unoda@un.org

Further virtual informal consultations on draft elements of the political commitments will be held on 26 July and 12 August at 10am New York time.

To allow for the best possible preparation of our substantive sessions, I have encouraged delegations to consider early on who specifically will cover the second substantive session in Geneva and to involve these individuals in your internal deliberations but also our informal consultation process. In this respect, the virtual informal consultations will also represent a good opportunity to familiarize those that have not been able to follow our session in New York at the end of May with the issues under discussion and the positions of delegations.

As you may recall, at the first substantive session, following the nomination from the Latin America and Caribbean Group, the OEWG elected Her Excellency Ambassador Maritza Chan-Valverde, Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations as Vice-chairperson. I would like to reiterate the invitation to all regional groups to nominate members of the Bureau for election at the second substantive session.

This concludes my briefing today, I stand ready to answer your questions on the work of the OEWG. Thank for your attention!