Chairperson,

South Africa wishes to congratulate you on your appointment as Vice-Chair of this Working Group, to enable the formal proceedings of the working group to proceed pending the arrival of the Chair, Mr Albrecht von Wittke. We pledge our support to you and the Chair in the upcoming process.

Chairperson,

South Africa supported and co-sponsored resolution 76/233 which decided to establish an open-ended working group to elaborate a set of political commitments as a new global framework that will address existing gaps in through-life ammunition management, including international cooperation and assistance.

The resolution also decided that the open-ended working group shall take into account the recommendations contained in the report of the Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 72/55.

My delegation believes that the mandate of this working group is vital in addressing the twin challenges related to safety in stockpile management and security challenges in terms of diversion of conventional ammunition at all stages of the through-life management of ammunition.

Chairperson,
South Africa is concerned by the threat posed by the illicit diversion of ammunition in varied contexts such as conflict, crime and terrorist activity, which limits the effectiveness of arms control initiatives and the regulation of flows of conventional arms and ammunition. This is of particular concern on the African continent, where conflict fueled by such illicit flows are sustained by illicit diversion and where limited capacity of stockpile management also threatens the safety of the population.

In an effort to address these gaps, we therefore, welcome recommendations that a set of political commitments at the global level should provide a mechanism to support those regions, sub-regions and Member States that voluntarily wish to translate political commitments into action such as national systems that monitor and prevent diversion.

Indeed, the scope of the challenge posed by conventional ammunition would require tailored approaches at both the national and regional levels. We believe that this open-ended format provides an opportunity to hear from each Member State about their specific concerns, and the context and specific challenges faced. This, we believe will enrich our efforts to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges of ammunition management.

South Africa counts itself amongst those States that believe that such a comprehensive approach should be holistic in nature and therefore one in which ammunition management forms an integral part of their overall national conventional arms control systems.

Chairperson,

It is also of particular importance that political commitments and any framework at the global level should be accompanied by international cooperation and assistance, that fall in line with regional and subregional commitments and national actions. It should also not prejudice national legal systems addressing national ammunition ownership, possession and use, but enable the international community to leave no one behind, recognizing that addressing diversion is only as effective as the capacity of the most vulnerable and susceptible to such diversion globally.
We need to identify and promote measures that are designed to monitor and enhance the effectiveness of safety and security at all stages of the through-life management of ammunition, in a comprehensive manner addressing the issues of scope, context, life-cycle, and level of action. The global framework should support measures at regional and national level. Political commitments to this end could include among others:

- The facilitation of international cooperation and assistance based on needs and tailored to context;
- The development of voluntary operational guidelines on security aspects of through-life ammunition management under UN auspices;
- Support voluntary targets, and information exchange among states;
- Development of a repository on the different regional, subregional and national commitments; and
- Establishment of a dialogue mechanism with regular meetings to provide follow-up on these commitments and efforts.

Chairperson,

This working group provides the first occasion to address the challenges and gaps in through-life ammunition management in a broad, inclusive and comprehensive manner, and we look forward to the ideas and views expressed on elaborating a set of political commitments as a new global framework to address this pressing challenge. My delegation also looks forward to elaborating on each of agenda items related to matters of safety; security; global, regional and subregional processes; and vitally, international cooperation and assistance, with the end goal of a comprehensive framework to support safe, secure and sustainable through-life ammunition management at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. In this regard, we welcome the planned briefings by experts under some of the agenda items and trust that these will enrich our discussions.

You can count on our support for your efforts throughout this substantive session and for the subsequent sessions in Geneva and once again in New York.

I thank you.