Ireland thanks Germany for chairing the Open Ended Working Group on Ammunition and for your continued endeavours in the area of through life ammunition management and control.

EU alignment

Ireland fully supports the objectives set out for the Open Ended Working Group. We remain committed to engaging with and addressing the safe and secure management of conventional ammunition through its full life cycle.

It is Ireland’s long held position that ammunition should be subject to similar guidelines as small arms and light weapons, across existing commitments. Ammunition is essential to the use and threat of use of weapons. It is transferred in far greater quantities than Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and is more susceptible to illicit diversion.

While some existing commitments make reference to the subject of ammunition, it has historically been marginal. It is imperative that this open-ended working group provides an operational basis for discussion and progress. We need to promote synergies across the various UN initiatives in this area to better use the tools that we already have – including Resolution 2220, the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the ATT, and the Secretary General’s Agenda for Disarmament, as well as other essential regional initiatives.

Ireland emphasises the important role that civil society plays in increasing accountability and transparency in ammunition management and conventional arms control more broadly. We need to make better use of the vital work of civil society actors who are critical to ongoing action in this field. This is not only limited to research, but in informing and shaping all levels of decision-making.

The grassroots activities and direct advocacy of civil society with decision-makers has led to the formulation of strong international frameworks and treaties, such as the ATT and the UN Programme of Action. We must build on these frameworks, which have clear humanitarian goals and have the potential to make a difference to the lives of millions of women, men and children. The participation of civil society in the work of the group is, therefore, imperative in understanding the different stages of through-life ammunition management and ensuring evidence-based decision-making.

As always, Ireland would emphasise the importance of a gender-responsive approach in arms control. We know that gender-responsive small arms control policies and programmes have proven to be more successful and sustainable. We must learn from this experience, and ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation. Ireland has been pleased to support UNODA’s research “Making room for improvement: Gender Dimensions of the Life-cycle Management of Ammunition”.

There is a link between the divergence of small arms and lights weapons and its ammunition and the perpetration of gender-based violence. Effectively addressing it is key to helping to achieve gender equality, sustainable development, and lasting peace and security. It is important for us to also highlight the distinct needs of children and youth in this context, which ought to be incorporated into all gender-sensitive and age-sensitive programmes.

It is essential to also underline that weapons and gun violence are used in both conflict, and non-conflict settings. Diverted ammunition is a key enabler of conflict and crime. Understanding and addressing this fact is crucial to shaping the direction of work of this group.
Finally, research shows that ammunition, alongside small arms and light weapons, are among most susceptible to illicit diversion. Embargoes are being circumvented, including through the diversion of national stockpiles. Further, there is no system of standardisation covering the specific aspect of ammunition marking, which, similar to the marking of firearms, means there are significant national and regional variations. Effective management of stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, and the tracing and elimination of illicit trafficking routes and points of diversion, is therefore essential. Export controls, international cooperation and information sharing are all critical elements that need to be considered and incorporated moving forward.

Chair,

Effective management and control of ammunition can have a real impact on armed violence arising from conflict and crime, and achieving a range of SDGs, including SDG 16 on peace and security, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 5 on gender equality. It is important that this Group makes real progress on this issue, and you will have our full support in achieving that.

Thank you, Chair.