UK Statement
Open Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition

Madam Chair, before I begin, may I note the UK’s congratulations you on your election, and thank you for stepping in at such short notice in response to our unforeseen circumstances. I would also like to note my thanks for Germany’s leadership on this issue and send my best wishes to our other Chair.

As we gather here today to discuss an important security issue, we cannot allow it to pass without comment that one UN member state has shown its disregard for the fundamental principles of the United Nations. Russia’s assault on Ukraine is an unprovoked, premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state. The UK condemns the Russian government’s egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter. The human cost of this invasion is massive. The pace of death and destruction is unrelenting. Russia must withdraw its troops. It must be held to account and stop undermining democracy, global stability, and international law.

Madam Chair, the UK was pleased to participate in the recent Group of Governmental Experts on ‘Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus’. The GGE members had a range of views, with robust yet constructive discussions and we believe that the Group’s recommendations were a significant step forward in the discussion of this important issue. They should be the starting point for the work of this Open Ended Working Group.

The effective control of ammunition is a goal that should unite us all, because the potential consequences of misuse and mismanagement are so grave. Its diversion, misuse and mismanagement causes humanitarian, socio-economic and environmental damage that costs lives, undermines security and sustainable development, and fuels conflict, crime and terrorism.

It is right and proper that States are able to trade, manufacture and retain ammunition for legitimate purposes. But as with weapons, this must be done in a safe and secure way. Elements of the counter proliferation and arms control architecture already cover ammunition and in that context we remain committed to the full implementation and universalisation of the Arms Trade Treaty. The UK has also supported the implementation of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs), both through bilateral support to states, and through support to the Ammunition Management Advisory Team. If the ATT and IATGs were implemented globally and effectively they would have a significant effect in improving the safe and secure management of ammunition.

However, we currently lack a comprehensive approach to this issue, covering the full life cycle of ammunition. The elaboration of a set of political commitments as a global framework is therefore an important goal. In its pursuit we should seek:

- To elevate the status of discussions of ammunition, reflecting the importance of the issue AND.
- To develop a comprehensive but flexible framework that can reflect regional and sub-regional considerations and action. This should cover
  - The complete life cycle of conventional ammunition;
o And both security and safety issues
o It must be ambitious and concrete, but it should also be realistic, recognising the diversity of legitimate approaches to some elements of ammunition management, and avoiding any over burdensome obligations that would hinder universal compliance

- The set of political commitments which we will elaborate in this group should also have a due focus on cooperation and assistance. This will help to ensure that we make a practical difference to the management of the ammunition life cycle. We must also ensure that we have an appropriate follow up mechanism to allow continuing consideration of this issue,

Madam Chair, the UK welcomes the agenda that is to be discussed over the coming days – we hope those discussions will be open, transparent, and cover the wide range of issues involved in our work to understand and address the safety and security risks posed by conventional ammunition. Throughout our work we must demonstrate our ability to be flexible to both different regional and national contexts; and to new challenges posed by emerging technologies.

Madam Chair, the UK stands ready to work to establish a framework, which builds upon and complements existing frameworks, to support safe, secure and sustainable through-life ammunition management across all conventional ammunition types.