South African Statement on Agenda Item 5 (b) Matters related to conventional ammunition security risk, OEWG on Conventional Ammunition

24 May 2022

Chairperson,

In terms of Matters related to conventional ammunition security risks,

We wish to point out that the risk of the diversion of ammunition into the illicit trade is perhaps greatest amongst all types of conventional weapons, as security measures are mostly limited to stockpile management and often does not encompass the entire through-life ammunition management cycle.

Furthermore, recurring capacity challenges in preventing ammunition diversion are compounded by the limited traceability of small-calibre ammunition, which are produced and transferred in massive quantities, are easily concealed and are favoured by armed criminals and armed non-state actors who use small arms as their weapon of choice.

Chairperson,

South Africa believes that the ammunition management cycle should include all aspects of the supply chain, which we would likely to elaborate on briefly.

We believe that stringent physical security measures need to be put in place during the production stage at production facilities, together with adequate and identifiable marking in order to detect and trace diverted ammunition. The marking of individual units or in the case of small-calibre ammunition, at least its packaging, should include the manufacturer and year of manufacture, as well as lot or batch numbers. States should encourage or require that ammunition producers keep records through their sales documentation and should verify the identities of their customers.
During the pre-transfer phase, the transfer control authorities of States should, amongst others, analyse the goods in relation to the end user and verify its bona fides, maintain records of manufacturers, brokers, shippers, as well as actual transfers, consider the risk of diversion during transit and trans-shipment, verify and authenticate transfer documentation, as well as implement post-shipment verification arrangements.

During the transfer, States should continue to apply or monitor their pre-transfer practices, as well as implement arrangements with shippers and in-transit storage providers and enforce transfer controls at their borders.

In the recovery stage, States should ensure that recovered illicit caches and abandoned munitions do not fall into the hands of criminals, armed non-state actors and terrorist groups.

And lastly, during the use and disposal phase, States should ensure that State-authorised bodies, such as defence, law enforcement and security forces keep effective records of their use of ammunition, as well as of their disposed ammunition, preferably through destruction. In this regard, States should ensure that such stocks are adequately safeguarded until disposal.

Chairperson,

In conclusion and bearing in mind the different situations, capacities and priorities of States, the provision and the requisite receipt of international assistance and cooperation remains essential in the fields of information-sharing, as well as material, technical and financial assistance.

We believe that building capacity within the respective national conventional arms transfer control structures and authorities in developing countries, is vital to the full and effective implementation of the new global framework to address existing gaps in the through-life management of ammunition.

I thank you.