United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition
First Substantive Session, 23 – 27 May 2022

Agenda item 5b: Matters related to conventional ammunition security
Addressing through-life ammunition security, including enhancing applicable measures and current limitations

New York, 24 May 2022
Statement by Switzerland

Mr. Chair,

Similarly as for the previous agenda item, please allow me to reiterate at the outset that effective ammunition management requires to take into account both safety and security aspects. In our practice, we consider these two aspects in an integrated manner.

The diversion of ammunition has an impact on States and their population in many parts of the world. Diverted ammunition plays a major role in fueling and sustaining conflict. If large-caliber ammunition is diverted, this can supply armed groups with explosive material for the manufacturing of improvised explosive devices. In States with high levels of armed violence, diversion facilitates criminality. The diversion of ammunition is a great concern for us all.

Ammunition is a consumable good. For this reason, verification measures taken after the arrival of ammunition at its destination are often challenging in practice. In this regard, we welcome the recommendation of the GGE that States could select those measures that they deem most effective and feasible. For instance, Switzerland considers delivery certificates by the importing State as a useful instrument to obtain guarantees that the shipment has reached its intended end recipient. In turn, in our practice, post-shipment verification has not proved meaningful nor feasible for the export of ammunition. Other on-site controls such as checking paper trail also present challenges due to the limited possibility to verify accuracy. Switzerland advocates for the open-ended working group to focus on measures that are both implementable and effective for importing and exporting States.

Since post-delivery verification measures are challenging and not always effective, the pre-delivery stage is all the more important for preventing diversion. In Switzerland’s experience, various tools have proved their value to enhance ammunition security. These are both effective and implementable in practice. In particular, we underline the relevance of thorough pre-transfer risk assessments as well as end-user certificates with non-retransfer clauses and import licenses. In the same vein, limiting the number of national officials authorised to issue end user and delivery certificates can enhance transparency and reliability, thereby establishing confidence between the importing and exporting States and contributing to mitigating diversion risks.
Mr. Chair,

In closing, let me point out to the observations that my delegation expressed in its general statement on marking practices as well as on the role of national authorities regarding civilian-held ammunition. These are also relevant for the discussion on security, but for reasons of time I will simply refer delegations to our general statement, available online. We trust that the structure of the political commitments will allow for flexibility to address such issues notably in consistency with national laws and regulations.

I thank you.