

Delegation of the Republic of Armenia
9th meeting of the UNTOC COP Working Group on Firearms

Vienna, 4 – 5 May 2022

Agenda item 2: Preventing and combating the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in ammunition.

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

At the outset we would like to thank the distinguished panelists for their interesting presentations and insightful remarks on this important issue.

As it was mentioned in the Final Report of the Group of Governmental Experts (on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus) - the problems arising from the excessive accumulation of ammunition continue to be of growing concern to the international community.

From Armenia's regional perspective, we know that excessive accumulation of weapons and ammunition and their diversion to unauthorized end-users are directly correlated with the heightened risk of war, hostilities and violations of basic human rights, including the right to life.

In this context, the State-sponsored diversion to terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters, engaged in an armed conflict in an organized and premediated manner, has a devastating impact on the regional peace and security. Such activities, witnessed back in 2020 against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) were conducted in stark violation of the international law and the UN Security Council Resolutions, including the resolution 2370 (2017) on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons.

Ironically, the attempts to suppress the basic human rights of people of Artsakh throughout the last three decades have coincided with unprecedented accumulation of weaponry, including firearms and ammunition, in amounts greatly exceeding the needed ratio for an effective self-defense and in violation of binding arms control regimes.

Mr. Chair,

According to the conclusions of the Group of Governmental Experts – the diversion of ammunition can occur at any point in its lifecycle, including during manufacture, before or during transfer, end use or disposal, and from both national stockpiles and private holdings.

The case of diversion of weapons and ammunition to foreign terrorist fighters, to which I referred earlier, was a clear example of diversion from national stockpiles, commissioned by a state. Therefore, the cases of State-sponsored firearms and ammunition diversion to criminals, terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters in violation of international law should command the immediate attention by the exporter states and entities, and the international community should institute effective control mechanisms against such crime.

In this context, while recognizing that post-delivery verification measures may still have some utility, as was assessed by the Group of Governmental Experts, the pre-delivery phase is of particular importance for such control mechanisms. Therefore, the exporting countries should institute stringent risk assessment mechanisms in their export authorizations for firearms and ammunition.

Recommendations

1: States should ensure that national export authorization and control systems implement stringent and effective risk assessment measures, taking into account human rights considerations, to prevent the potential use of

firearms and ammunition for committing gross human rights abuses and other crimes.

2: States should establish additional scrutiny for the transfer of firearms and ammunition to those end users, which have reportedly been providing financial and logistical support to terrorists and mercenaries in the context of armed conflict.