

**EU COMMON REPLY TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S
REQUEST FOR VIEWS**

**PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE ACCUMULATION OF
CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION STOCKPILES IN SURPLUS**

2 May 2007

The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/Res/61/72 entitled „Problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus“ on 6 December 2006. The resolution was sponsored by France and Germany. In adopting the resolution the General Assembly:

“ ...

4. Encourage(d) all Member States to examine the possibility of developing and implementing, within a national, regional or subregional framework, measures to address accordingly the illicit trafficking related to the accumulation of such stockpiles;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States regarding the risks arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus and regarding national ways of strengthening controls on conventional ammunition, and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session;

6. Decides to address the issue of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus in a comprehensive manner;

7. Requests the Secretary-General to establish a group of governmental experts, commencing no later than 2008, to consider further steps to enhance cooperation with regard to the issue of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, and to transmit the report of the Group of Experts to the General Assembly for consideration at its sixty-third session;

... ”

The Member States of the European have consistently paid due attention to the issue of ammunition. This is particularly true with regard to the EU's positions taken in the context of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The EU's Strategy to Combat Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition which was endorsed by its Council of Ministers in December 2005 *inter alia* underlines the importance of addressing the issue of ammunition. At the same time it promotes close international cooperation with regard to the management and security of stockpiles of conventional arms and ammunition:

“ ...

15. ... , the challenge for an EU strategy on SALW is to respond to these threats and to ensure that its security policy and its development policy are consistent, while fully exploiting the means available to it at multilateral and regional levels, within the European Union and in the EU's bilateral relations in order to frame an action plan which will:

(a) foster effective multilateralism so as to forge mechanisms, whether international, regional or within the EU and its Member States, for countering the supply and destabilising spread of

SALW and their ammunition. The Union must strengthen its export control policies and activities in coordination with its partners;

(b) meet requests by States seeking to reduce their surplus stocks of SALW and their ammunition, either under a stockpile reduction policy or by participating in DDR operations;
... “

Arms and Ammunition

International efforts to control the effects of trafficking, proliferation and misuse of arms have generally not paid the same attention to the issue of ammunition. Arms have often been disassociated from their ammunition. In particular with regard to small arms and light weapons, a number of important agreements have been adopted in recent years, while the issue of their ammunition has often been neglected. This is particularly true for the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. However, when this Instrument was considered by the UN Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons its report UN GA A/60/88 of 27 June 2005 recommended to specifically address the issue of ammunition:

“ ...

27. The Working Group recommends that the issue of small arms and light weapons ammunition be addressed in a comprehensive manner as part of a separate process conducted within the framework of the United Nations.

... ”

Ammunition stockpiles

Massive quantities of ammunition are held in insecure locations at considerable risk of loss, capture or diversion. These quantities of ammunition contribute to the risks of trafficking and proliferation and to the prolongations and intensification of armed conflict. At the same time, recent incidents at ammunition storage depots illustrate the resulting threat to security, health and the environment. Safe handling of ammunition poses specific requirements, since they contain explosive materials. Safe destruction of ammunition requires specialist skills and facilities. While different types of conventional ammunition, munitions or explosives have different requirements, the basic issues, priorities and skills required to promote the management and security of stockpiles are similar for most categories of concern: munitions for major conventional arms, SALW ammunition, bombs, IEDs, unexploded ordnance.

Many of the insecure and unsafe ammunition stockpiles are surplus stocks. This applies to military stockpiles, but also to the quantities of ammunition held by police and other agencies. The individual state needs to define surplus stockpiles and take a decision on how to deal with them. Stockpiles needed for national security purposes are to be separated from stockpiles that are insecure or in surplus. Stockpiles needed for national security purposes need to be safely stored, stockpiles that are insecure and in surplus must be destroyed.

Guidelines and Principles

Guidance documents on management and security of stockpiles of conventional ammunition are essential, also as a prerequisite for international assistance. The Member States of the European Union have endorsed such documents in the institutional frame of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition FSC.Doc 11/03 of 17 November 2003 and the on-going work on a Best Practice Guides on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition deserve to be mentioned. However, no such best practice guidelines have been developed and endorsed at the global level.

International Cooperation

International efforts with regard to the management and security of arms and ammunition stockpiles have increased recently. However, in comparison to the urgency of the problem posed by ammunition stockpiles, the scale of such cooperation appears to be limited. Due to the nature of ammunition, specific resources and cooperation programmes are required, so that surplus ammunition can be destroyed in a rapid, safe and transparent way. Training, advice on infrastructure improvements, advice on technical and administrative measures as well as record-keeping are key elements of such cooperation. The scale of the problem of insecure and unsafe ammunition stockpiles is so urgent that efforts to promote good practice need to be complemented by programmes which address the greatest risks on an emergency basis.

Group of Governmental Experts

In order for the Group of Governmental Experts to address the above issues in a convincing and comprehensive manner, the Expert Group needs to take a broad look at the issues related to ammunition as well as the management and security of their stockpiles. Such a wide approach, considering past work and progress made in other fora, would allow the Group to make a meaningful contribution to addressing the dangers resulting from ineffective and inefficient management and security of stockpiles of conventional ammunition.