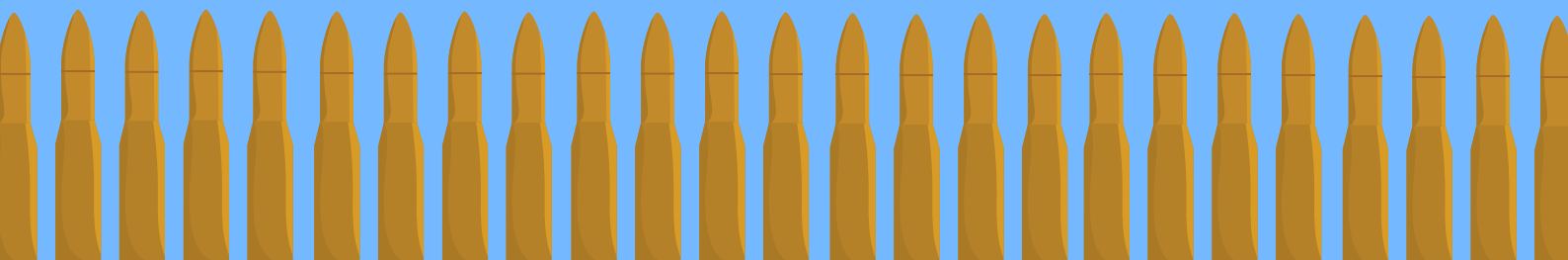
KEY ISSUES AND PROCESSES PERTINENT TO THE MANAGEMENT OF CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION

REPORT OF THE SECOND THEMATIC SEMINAR

UNIDIR



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The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)—an autonomous institute within the United Nations—conducts research on disarmament and security. UNIDIR is based in Geneva, Switzerland, the centre for bilateral and multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations, and home of the Conference on Disarmament. The Institute explores current issues pertaining to a variety of existing and future armaments, as well as global diplomacy and local tensions and conflicts. Working with researchers, diplomats, government officials, NGOs and other institutions since 1980, UNIDIR acts as a bridge between the research community and Governments. UNIDIR activities are funded by contributions from Governments and donor foundations.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

IATGs	International Ammunition Technical Guidelines
LCMA	lifecycle management of ammunition
PSSM	physical security and stockpile management

Key findings

- **There is a lack of a dedicated international framework to address issues related to conventional ammunition management.** Ammunition has been described as the 'orphan' of conventional arms control frameworks. Experts, practitioners, and state representatives present at UNIDIR's second seminar on managing conventional ammunition underscored that there is no dedicated international framework addressing issues related to conventional ammunition management. General Assembly resolution 72/55, and the request to the Secretary-General to convene a Group of Governmental Experts in 2020, might be an opportunity to fill this gap.
- **The lack of dedicated frameworks at global, regional, and subregional levels makes it difficult to mobilize political action and poses challenges for international cooperation and assistance.** In some regions, legal frameworks that encompass small arms ammunition exist, but their implementation remains uneven and challenging.
- **The seminars identified two main issues:**
    - **managing the risks related to the safety of ammunition** to prevent unplanned explosions at munitions sites; and
    - **diversion of ammunition to unauthorized/unintended users** as an enabling and contributing factor for insecurity and the escalation of armed violence and conflict.
- **The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs) provide authoritative and validated technical guidance to States**. The IATGs in isolation will not address all dimensions related to the safety and security of conventional ammunition and there is a need to situate stockpile management in a comprehensive framework that includes every stage of the supply chain.
- **International cooperation and assistance should promote physical infrastructure improvements, but also long-term engagement and capacity-building to ensure sustainability**. The IATGs offer positive support to ammunition management operations, but alone are not enough to deliver sustainable solutions to ammunition mismanagement.
- **A holistic approach to encourage the safe, secure, and accountable management of conventional ammunition throughout its lifecycle merits further examination** including potential overlapping and relationship between the lifecycle management of ammunition (LCMA) approach and supply-chain management approaches.
- **A responsibility and accountability cycle for safe and secure management of ammunition** would situate physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) within a wider framework with at least three interrelated areas:
    - pre-transfer risk assessments;
    - PSSM measures; and
    - monitoring and diagnostic activities.
- **Elements, processes, and practices pertinent to each area of the responsibility and accountability cycle merit further discussion and analysis**. These elements should include verification of parties involved in a transfer, analysis of routes, information exchange between licensing and customs authorities, identification of points of diversion after the fact, tracing, and reporting. Determination of these elements and how to integrate them in a comprehensive system could be the focus for upcoming UNIDIR seminars and further research.

1 Introduction

This report presents findings from the second of a series of seminars convened within the framework of UNIDIR's Framing and Informing Key Issues and Processes Pertinent to the Management of Conventional Ammunition project. UNIDIR will convene at least one additional seminar during 2019.

This project aims to facilitate dialogue and generate ideas to help frame key issues and inform States about processes pertinent to conventional ammunition management on which progress can be made at national, regional, and multilateral levels. Elements and findings from this seminar series are relevant to States' preparations for the open, informal consultations organized within the framework of resolution 72/55,[1] as well as other relevant conventional ammunition management initiatives. The report from the first seminar of the series is available on UNIDIR's website.[2] These two reports are intended to serve as primers for government officials, diplomats and non-technical audiences to the key issues and processes of conventional ammunition management.

1.1 AIMS OF THE SECOND INFORMAL THEMATIC SEMINAR

The second thematic seminar took place on 5 March 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. Practitioners and policymakers convened to discuss all aspects of the management of conventional ammunition and explored substantive areas in which progress can be made. This informal meeting enabled participants, who included national and regional subject matter experts, national diplomats, representatives of international organizations, and independent specialists, to raise and discuss issues in an informal setting. Discussions complemented initial findings on key issues and processes identified during the first thematic seminar, which took place on 27–28 November 2018 in Geneva. This report does not present a particular position, but rather synthesizes the flow of discussions and the key issues that arose during the seminar.

The views presented are best understood as a contribution to the international dialogue on conventional ammunition control measures—a stocktaking of existing issues, initiatives, instruments, and challenges. This discussion is broader than the framework outlined in General Assembly resolution 72/55, and may have relevance beyond the conclusion of that specific United Nations process.

[1] General Assembly, UN document A/RES/72/55, 2017, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/72/55.
[2] Report of the First Thematic Seminar, http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/key-issues-and-processes-pertinent-to-the-management-of-conventional-ammunition-en-745.pdf.

2 Thematic focus areas

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE AND FINDINGS FROM THE FIRST SEMINAR

General Assembly resolution 72/55 emphasizes the importance of "the dangers posed by unplanned explosions at munitions sites and the diversion of materials from conventional ammunition stockpiles to the illicit market, including for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices". It notes that "thousands of people have died and the livelihoods of entire communities have been disrupted as a result of accidental ammunition depot explosions and that diversion from ammunition stockpiles has contributed to the intensity and duration of armed conflict and sustained armed violence around the world**"**.[3]

Participants in both thematic seminars emphasized the timeliness of resolution 72/55 and its request to the Secretary-General to convene a Group of Governmental Experts in 2020 to address the risks related to safety and security of conventional ammunition management. During the second seminar, UNIDIR presented key elements and findings from its November 2018 meeting to initiate discussion and set the scene for further examination:[4]

1. **Ammunition control measures are present in a certain number of international and regional instruments, but they are relatively fragmented and limited in scope**. A dedicated framework is lacking to address this challenge at the multilateral level. Areas for further examination include transfers, stockpiles, disposal, managing recovered materiel, and monitoring and diagnostic activities.
2. **The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs) are the main tool to support the safe and secure management of conventional ammunition stockpiles.** They provide a comprehensive set of internationally developed measures to address management of conventional ammunition stockpiles. Comprehensive use of the IATGs would solve most of the ammunition safety issues that national governments encounter and some of the ammunition security problems.
3. **Application of IATGs in isolation would not address the different sources of ammunition diversion,** which result from a number of weaknesses along the ammunition supply chain.
4. **Beyond stockpiles, ammunition diversion also happens by other means.** It can happen via false or fraudulent documentation, illicit brokering, unauthorized retransfer to non-State end users, diversion in-transit, etc.
5. **A supply chain management approach could be useful in addressing diversion and the illicit trafficking of ammunition**. The relationship between this approach and the lifecycle management approach to ammunition management (LCMA) approach merits further examination.

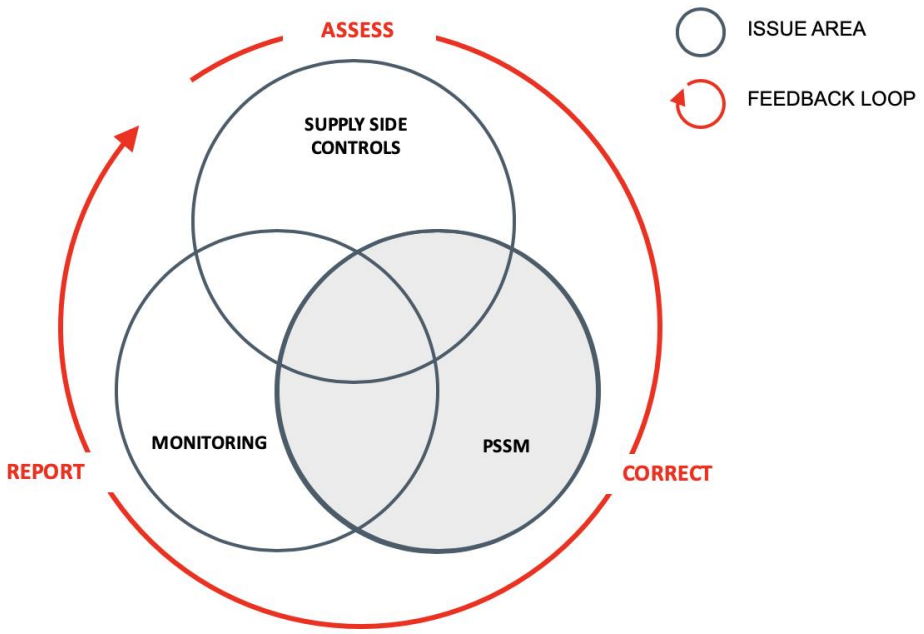
To summarize the conclusions of the first seminar, a twin-track approach to conventional ammunition management could be fruitful for States:

1. **Sustain efforts to encourage uptake and use of the IATGs**, with particular efforts placed on sensitization, long-term programming within national action frameworks, and the development of sustainable ammunition technical expertise; and

[3] General Assembly, UN document A/RES/72/55, 2017, pg. 1, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol= A/RES/72/55.
[4] Report of the First Thematic Seminar, http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/key-issues-and-processes-pertinent-to-the-management-of-conventional-ammunition-en-745.pdf.

2. **Consider the systemic aspects of ammunition control more carefully**, recognizing the linkages between supply-side controls, stockpile management, and the critical role of monitoring and reporting as a way to promote coordinated action at national, regional, and international levels.

Figure 1: Responsibility and Accountability Cycle for Safe and Secure Management of Ammunition (from Conflict Armament Research)[5]



2.2 LIFECYCLE APPROACH TO CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION MANAGEMENT

Conventional ammunition management is a multifaceted undertaking that goes beyond stockpile management measures. It requires placing national and international efforts within a wider supply chain framework to encourage the safe, secure, and accountable management of conventional ammunition throughout its lifecycle. The Group of Governmental Experts in 2008 focused on physical security and stockpile management (PSSM), but an effective ammunition management system or framework needs an exhaustive and multidimensional approach.

During the second seminar, a holistic management system for conventional ammunition was discussed drawing from the LCMA developed by the Small Arms Survey.[6] The LCMA model describes the lifecycle management of ammunition as:

[5] Illustration provided by Conflict Armament Research and adapted from the working group on security in the first UNIDIR thematic seminar. The circle representing PSSM is shaded to reflect that it was previously discussed by the 2008 Group of Governmental Experts, while Monitoring and Supply Side Controls were not.

[6] http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/Q-Handbooks/HB-05-LCMA/SAS-HB05-LCMA.pdf.

> [A] **comprehensive** set of **integrated** processes and activities that ensure **sustainable** and **cost-effective** management of … ammunition, delivering a safe and secure stockpile that meets national strategic and operational needs.
>
> - **Comprehensive:** by covering all aspects of ammunition management;
> - **Integrated system**: within which all the elements work together;
> - **Sustainable**: so that the system can be maintained over time; and
> - **Cost-effective**: yielding positive results in relation to its cost.[7]

In order to meet the State's strategic objectives and operational requirements, **the LCMA model proposes an integrated approach and considers both political and technical considerations of ammunition management**. During the session, participants discussed national ownership as the enabling condition of the LCMA system where functional elements were defined as:

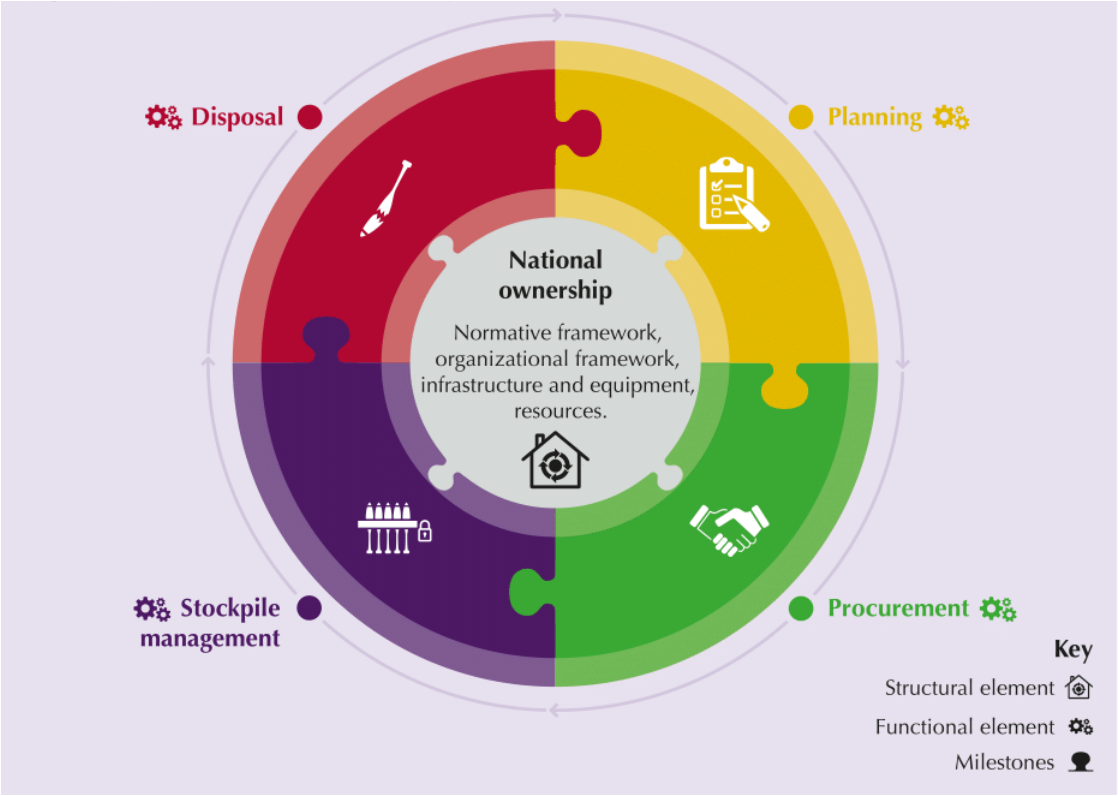
- planning;
- procurement;
- stockpile management; and
- disposal.

National ownership is a central precondition for a sustainable LCMA system. "National ownership goes beyond political buy-in, and implies that a State takes full responsibility for LCMA as demonstrated by national authorities' active engagement in the development, implementation, and oversight of an LCMA system and provision of adequate financial and other resources to support its implementation".[8] In practical terms, national ownership means that a State applying an LCMA model will be able to establish and maintain normative and structural frameworks, infrastructure, equipment, and financial and human resources.

Observations made during the seminar suggest the importance of addressing priorities (usually identified as PSSM interventions) and funding limitations, but at the same time understanding and addressing the broader challenges of lifecycle management and beyond, including diversion and illicit trafficking of ammunition. Further research and discussions might be needed to determine if the utilization of the IATGs is more effective when they are used within an LCMA framework.

[7] Presentation by Jovana Carapic, Small Arms Survey.
[8] Ibid.

Figure 2: Lifecycle Management of Ammunition (LCMA) approach developed by the Small Arms Survey[9]



2.3 GOING BEYOND STOCKPILES: PRE-TRANSFER RISK ASSESSMENTS

Effective national controls over the transfer of conventional ammunition are necessary to prevent diversion and illicit transfers. A key security element to prevent diversion of ammunition through the lifecycle is conducting an effective pre-transfer risk assessment. The objective of pre-transfer risk assessments is to evaluate the risks of diversion along the supply chain and ensure that only authorized users are in custody of the ammunition. During the seminar, participants discussed the means and methods to conduct an effective pre-transfer risk assessment with a view to identifying essential control steps and measures at the national level including risk indicators, roles and responsibilities, end-user control systems, verification, and exchange of information mechanisms and related documentation.[10]

Diversion can happen at any moment during the lifecycle of ammunition and pre-transfer risk assessment is considered as a supply-side measure that complements PSSM and other actions. An effective pre-transfer risk assessment considers risks at different stages of the lifecycle, relies on having credible and reliable information from different sources at the right time, and contributes towards an accountable system of ammunition management. Key elements to consider when conducting pre-transfer risk assessments are:[11]

[9] Carapic, Deschambault, Holtom, and King (2018), p. 41. http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/Q-Handbooks/HB-05-LCMA/SAS-HB05-LCMA.pdf

[10] It is important to note that pre-transfer risk assessments usually address security aspects. However, there are safety considerations that could be taken into account when conducting pre-transfer risk assessments.

[11] Presentation by Dumisani Dladla, Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat.

- maintaining a register of manufacturers, agents, brokers, freight forwarders, vessels, aircraft, etc.;
- role of manufacturers, industry and other private actors involved in the supply chain;
- verifying the credibility and legitimacy of all parties involved in the transfer;
- verifying and authenticating transfer documentation (end-user documentation, assurances, contracts, agreements, and commitments);
- considering the diversion risks of a route and the role of transit States;
- evaluating the status of controls in importing and transit States;
- understanding the political stability in the recipient State and possible implications for regions and subregions;
- the nature of ammunition (small arms ammunition may pose a higher risk of diversion)
- pre-delivery verification (at the port of exit);
- post-delivery verification systems (certificates, inspections, cooperation programmes, destruction certificates);
- communication between customs and national export licensing authorities;
- considering risk mitigation measures (including marking requirements); and
- the elaboration of checklists for risk analysis.

The seminar's discussions suggest that the risk of diversion cannot be completely eliminated. However, emphasis was made on the importance of providing timely credible information to the national actors. Potential sources of information are open sources, government information and intelligence, police records, customs documentation, previous licenses, industry records, United Nations expert panel reports, information exchanges (bilateral, regional, and multilateral), and independent monitoring organizations. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of strengthening control systems in importing countries, especially when small arms ammunition is going to a private end user in the importing country.

2.4 PHYSICAL SECURITY AND STOCKPILE MANAGEMENT

The diversion of conventional ammunition to illicit markets, groups and individuals poses a serious threat to peace and security. The diversion of conventional ammunition may occur due to leakage, theft or loss due to weakened stockpile management practices among other reasons. The seminar explored challenges and opportunities in security-related risks and threats associated with conventional ammunition in the context of PSSM.

The seminar discussed several dimensions of ammunition diversion from stockpiles. Diversion from stockpiles or from national holdings could happen during operations, in the battlefield, during transportation, in training, in storage, during disposal processes, or at the time of manufacture. Diversion of ammunition is facilitated by aggravating circumstances such as poor physical security, poor ammunition management, poor control and oversight measures, and low morale or corruption.[12] Therefore, the determination of surplus is an essential element to reduce the risk of unplanned explosions at munitions sites and diversion. As described in the first seminar, surplus is a by-product of a well-functioning ammunition management system.[13]

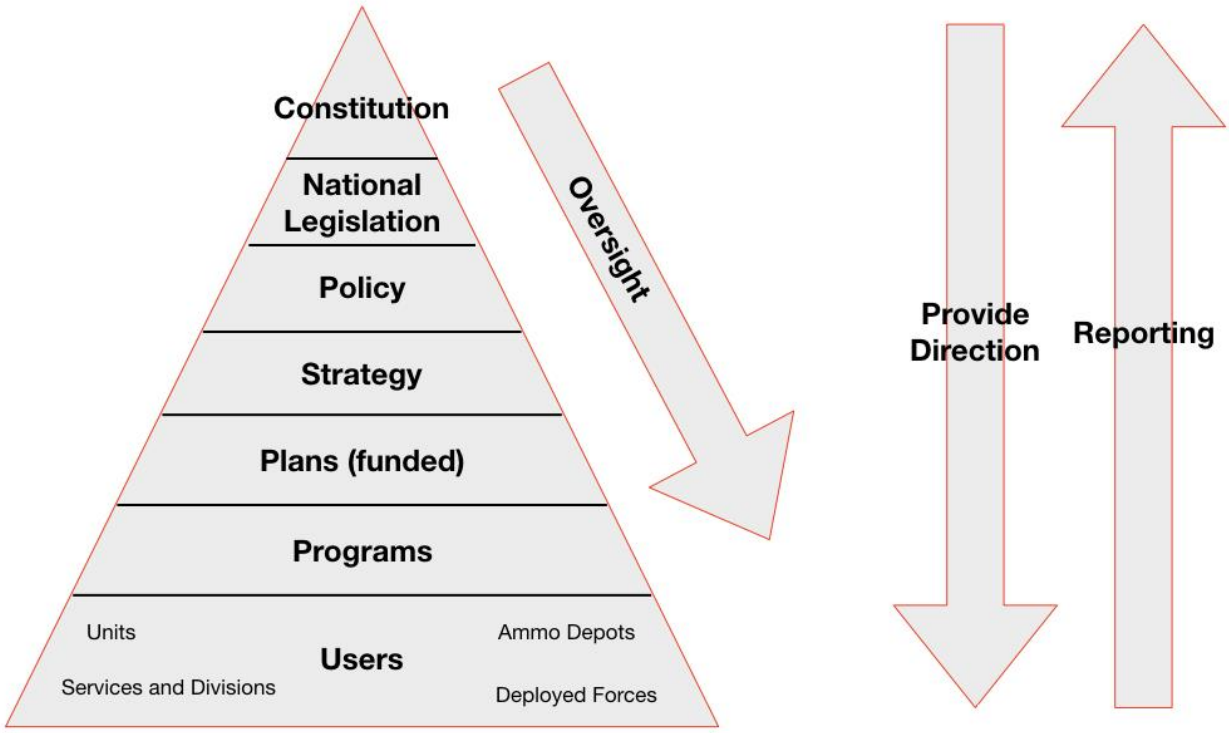
The IATGs provide extensive guidance for PSSM, inclusive of security aspects, security plans, vetting of personnel, physical security measures, accounting, and record-keeping. For a PSSM

[12] Presentation by Col. Joe H. Palmer, South Africa.
[13] The importance lies in knowing what you need, what you have, in what conditions, and what to do with it.

system to be effective it is essential to have comprehensive records of the ammunition in inventory including information related to quantities, location, shelf life, and stability. In the absence of adequate national systems to manage conventional ammunition, the use of the IATGs is essential.

In addition, the seminar considered political buy-in at the highest political level essential to establish effective PSSM strategies, policies, procedures, and practices. A top-down approach to ammunition security was deemed necessary to provide direction from the highest level of government to the personnel responsible of the divisions, units and the ammunition depots. In some circumstances, such as low-capacity or conflict-affected settings, when a top-down approach at the political level is not feasible in the short term, and there is an urgent need to reduce the risk of explosion and diversion, immediate actions might be taken at the bottom level.

Figure 3: National PSSM oversight[14]



Nonetheless, the focus and scope of an effective ammunition management system might not be only on military stockpiles because the issues and stakeholders are wider. Other important stakeholders might include law enforcement entities, private security companies, craft producers, etc.

[14] Illustration adapted by UNIDIR from presentation delivered by Col. Joe H. Palmer, South Africa, in the second thematic seminar.

2.5 MONITORING AND DIAGNOSTIC ACTIVITIES

Most illicit ammunition is legally manufactured or imported and subsequently diverted to the illicit market. In this regard, accurately identifying the point of diversion is crucial to preventing future diversion. Systematic monitoring, tracking and reporting of illicit ammunition through the lines of supply is an essential element to the security of conventional ammunition. Experts examined the means and methods to monitor and report on illicit ammunition flows, with a view to identifying key control steps and measures at the national, regional and multilateral levels.

To sustain operations, ammunition needs to be replenished but it is often anonymous if it is unboxed, making it difficult to be traced. Further investigation in this area would be needed to understand better how monitoring and diagnostics of ammunition could be enhanced and integrated in ammunition management systems. Elements to be discussed in this area include:

- detection mechanisms;
- tracing;
- profiling; and
- reporting.

Without monitoring and diagnostic activities, national governments conducting pre-transfer risk assessments do not know if their ammunition is going somewhere that it is not supposed to go. The Blue Lantern programme provides an example of monitoring and diagnostic activities and it is also interlinked with pre-transfer risk assessments conducted by the United States Department of State. The Blue Lantern End-Use Monitoring Program verifies foreign consignees and end-users, confirms receipt and disposition of exported articles, and confirms end use and compliance with assurances and requirements. Practical measures under the programme include basic risk indicators, physical checks, phone calls, and open source investigations.[15]

2.6 REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND APPROACHES

Several regional instruments address conventional ammunition in their provisions, but they are relatively fragmented and vary in scope and application. Resolution 72/55 offers various options for States to explore regional and subregional approaches to conventional ammunition management. Participants shared regional and subregional experiences and examined possible regional avenues and approaches to strengthen safe, secure and accountable conventional ammunition management. The seminar included presentations from several regional and subregional actors from representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean (UNREC, UNRCPD, and UNLIREC) and the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS).

There is a lack of a dedicated frameworks for conventional ammunition management at the regional and subregional levels. In some regions, legal frameworks include provisions on small arms ammunition, but implementation remains uneven and challenging. For example, ECOWAS States do not differentiate ammunition from small arms and light weapons when implementing their

[15] Blue Lantern programme presentation, US Department of State.

obligations under the ECOWAS convention but there are specific provisions for ammunition (i.e. marking). In Latin America and the Caribbean there is no real consensus on the issue of conventional ammunition management but there is a recognized need for sharing best practices and there is a strong sense that ammunition cannot be divorced from small arms and light weapons. In Asia and the Pacific, ammunition provisions are missing from relevant frameworks. Further examination of regional and subregional frameworks and practices is needed. These frameworks could facilitate practical entry points at the political level to operationalize ammunition management processes and operations.

2.7 GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING AMMUNITION MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS

The IATGs provide a comprehensive set of internationally developed measures to address the management of conventional ammunition stockpiles. In this respect, resolution 72/55 serves to reiterate the need for international action in areas that are already identified within the IATGs. Moreover, resolution 72/55 and Action 22 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament encourage the widespread utilization of the IATGs.

Participants discussed how international cooperation and assistance could better support ammunition management operations. It was highlighted that only a portion of the assistance that is currently provided is based on the IATGs and not all international assistance and cooperation initiatives are addressing the main purpose: sustainability. Nonetheless, there are several ongoing efforts and initiatives to roll out the IATGs, mainly the United Nations SaferGuard Programme and the newly established Ammunition Management Advisory Team. The Advisory Team's goal is to "enhance State and regional action on safe and secure management of ammunition with a view to reducing the risk of unintended explosions and diversion to the illicit market, by supporting States with technical advice and transfer of knowledge, and by facilitating effective and sustainable international cooperation and assistance".[16]

In addition, three new SaferGuard publications were mentioned to support States in their efforts on conventional ammunition management:

- "Critical Path Guide to the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines",[17] developed by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in partnership with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD);

- "A Guide to Developing National Standards for Ammunition Management",[18] also developed by UNODA in partnership with GICHD; and

- "Utilizing the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines in Conflict-Affected and Low-Capacity Environments",[19] developed by UNIDIR.

[16] https://www.amat.org/.
[17] https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/critical-path-guide-to-the-international-ammunition-technical-guidelines/.
[18] https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/more/a-guide-to-developing-national-standards-for-ammunition-management.
[19] http://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/utilizing-the-international-ammunition-technical-guidelines-in-conflict-affected-and-low-capacity-environments-en-749.pdf.

3 Seminar conclusions

To address the risks of unplanned explosions and diversion to unauthorized users effectively, the seminar confirmed that there is a need to approach conventional ammunition management comprehensively. The seminar's observations suggest that a wider approach to encourage the safe, secure, and accountable management of conventional ammunition throughout its lifecycle could address both aspects.

Such a framework could be defined as a responsibility and accountability cycle for safe and secure management of ammunition and it would encompass three differentiated areas: pre-transfer risk assessments, PSSM, and monitoring and diagnostic activities.

Definition and detailed description of elements and processes for each of these areas merit further attention:

- **pre-transfer risk assessments:** checklists, registers, verification and authentication procedures, information exchange mechanisms, and mitigation measures;
- **PSSM:** security plans, vetting of personnel, physical security measures, accountancy, record-keeping, surplus determination, and political buy-in and oversight; and
- **monitoring and diagnostics:** detection mechanisms, tracing, profiling, and reporting.

The seminar agreed that a dedicated framework at the international, regional or subregional level could facilitate practical entry points at the political level for the establishment of national systems and for the facilitation of international assistance and cooperation programmes.

Finally, ongoing efforts to roll out the IATGs need to be advanced to facilitate ammunition management operations. The role of the SaferGuard Programme and the newly established Ammunition Management Advisory Team seems crucial to provide sustainable and effective technical support to Stats developing and enhancing ammunition management operations.

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