

Monday 11 September 2017 - Geneva
Statement under General Debate

Mister President,

It is my pleasure to address you today on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and to congratulate you on your leadership as President of the Third Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Protection of civilians is at the centre of UNMAS' work, and over the last twenty years, we have witnessed first-hand the evolution of conflicts and the deadly impact of the flow of conventional arms. More and more frequently, we have seen the proliferation of weapons and ammunition cause devastating harm to civilian populations. Weapons proliferation can exacerbate tensions within communities and hamper efforts to recover peace and stability. Weapons can also be diverted and trafficked towards illicit hands, including terrorist groups who purposely target civilians, peacekeepers and aid workers.

Article 6 of the ATT refers to circumstances of prohibition in measures adopted by the United Nations Security Council, and in particular, arms embargoes. UNMAS would like to assure the international community of its support and contribution to the effective implementation of arms embargoes adopted by the Security Council.

UNMAS programmes in places such as Central African Republic and Somalia, support national authorities, to comply with arms embargoes by providing capacity-development training, advice and mentorship of national authorities, and by contributing to compliance monitoring through information sharing.

We have noted some positive impact. For example, Côte d'Ivoire was under a partial UN arms embargo between 2004 and 2016. UNMAS supported national authorities to strengthen their control of the country's weapon and ammunition stockpiles, which in turn contributed to them being in compliance with the embargo and eventually, to its lifting in 2016.

UNMAS also contributes to compliance monitoring and information sharing on arms embargoes. In the Central African Republic, UNMAS supports the work of the Panel of Experts to monitor the arms embargo by providing relevant reports and information on the status of armament.

Closely related to supporting compliance with arms embargoes, stockpile management can greatly contribute to the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, and is an essential factor when assessing the potential impact of an exportation, as required under article 7. Arms, especially small arms and light weapons, can be diverted from national stockpiles, and be illicitly trafficked towards the hands of non-state actors. As established in Article 11, states are responsible for preventing the diversion of conventional arms, and

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Article 16 on international assistance provides the possibility for States to request needed assistance for secure stockpile management.

UNMAS has a proven expertise in mentoring, training and, on occasion, equipping national authorities to effectively manage their conventional weapons and ammunition. When requested by a host government or by the Security Council, UNMAS has provided such assistance in numerous countries, including the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Libya, Somalia and South Sudan.

In Mali, since 2013, UNMAS has provided advisory support and a wide range of training on the safe storage and management of weapons and ammunitions. A total of 242 members of the Malian Defence and Security Forces have been trained, while UNMAS also supported the rehabilitation of 24 armouries throughout the country and the safe destruction of 341 tons of obsolete, unsafe and unserviceable ammunition and nearly 11,000 SALW. This is the largest stockpile disposed of by a national authority with UNMAS assistance to date.

In Somalia, UNMAS has drafted a new legal framework and standard operating procedures for weapons and ammunitions management, and provides technical support and strategic advice to the Federal Government, in addition to equipping a central storage facility for weapons and ammunition reception and initial storage.

UNMAS strongly believes that implementation of effective weapons and ammunition management is an important facet of the ATT, with significant humanitarian impact, and UNMAS stands ready to make available its expertise and to respond to requests for assistance by States in addressing these challenges.

Thank you.