

**Open-ended working group on conventional ammunition
established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/233**

Working Paper

Submitted by Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Small Arms Survey

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**Security Sector Governance Principles for the Oversight and Accountability of
Ammunition Through-Life Management**

Summary

The through-life management (TLM) of ammunition involves both technical and governance aspects related to oversight and accountability, although these latter aspects have been not been elaborated so far in informal consultations. The anticipated Global Framework on Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management should provide states with guidance on how to apply established principles of security sector governance, in line with other good practice guidelines, and highlight the important role of internal oversight actors, and external oversight actors such as parliamentarians and civil society, in ammunition TLM.

Framing unplanned explosions at munitions sites and ammunition diversion as a governance issue

1. 636 unplanned explosions at munitions site (UEMS) incidents occurred between January 1979 and December 2021, resulting in death or injury for 30,883 people as well as wider socio-economic and environmental consequences for many more.¹ The major causes of UEMS are the failure to take into account external and environmental influences and events, handling errors or inappropriate working practices, inappropriate storage infrastructure and systems, poor security or a lack of chemical surveillance, leading to ammunition deterioration.²
2. Improperly stored or disposed of ammunition can result in diversion to criminal or terrorist groups, unauthorised use by individuals to facilitate acts of violence, including gender-based violence, and environmental degradation caused by leakage into the surrounding environment.³ The loss, theft, illicit transfer and degradation of ammunition are often the result of poor accounting, management and inadequate physical security of storage facilities.⁴
3. Although the immediate cause of UEMS, ammunition diversion and leakage may be technical and operational, they cannot be addressed in isolation. Rather, they are indicative of systemic—or strategic—failures in ammunition management.⁵ This is why the UN SaferGuard programme advocates the ammunition through-life management (TLM) model as a holistic, comprehensive approach to mitigating safety and security risks associated with ammunition.
4. The Group of Government Experts noted, however, that there is often a:

*[d]isconnection between stockpile management initiatives that address immediate risks as well as long-term challenges at the operational level and security sector governance and reform initiatives with a strategic focus on top-level government. The lack of cohesion between strategic and operational levels in these projects and initiatives reduces their effectiveness and sustainability.*⁶

¹ Small Arms Survey. 2022. [‘Quick facts on unplanned explosions at munitions sites \(UEMS\)’](#). Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

² Baccini, Marco and Remo Gassmann. 2020. [‘UEMS in Residential Areas’](#). Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

³ United Nations General Assembly. 2021. [‘Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus’](#). A/76/324 of 14 September, para. 19, 20 and 73.

⁴ Čarapić, Jovana, Eric J. Deschambault, Paul Holtom and Benjamin King. 2018. ‘A Practical Guide to Life-cycle Management of Ammunition’. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, p. 24.

⁵ Čarapić et al., 2018, p.34.

⁶ UNGA, 2021, para. 65(c).

5. In addition, effectively implementing gender-sensitive practices and fostering exchange and cooperation with civil society, academia, research institutions and industry to enhance ammunition through-life management requires strong internal oversight, a culture of transparency and an openness to public and parliamentary oversight.⁷
6. To improve strategic–operational coherence, states may consider incorporating recommendations related to security sector governance within the global framework on conventional ammunition management in order to promote sustainable, long-term approaches to ammunition through-life management and in line with established good practices in other related arms control fields.⁸

Principles of security sector governance (SSG)

7. Governance describes the rules and processes through which different actors exercise power and authority so that an institution can carry out its work. Some governance processes are formal and clearly regulated whereas others consist of informal practices; some only involve people working for the institution while others involve a wide array of other stakeholders who have an interest in how the institution functions.
8. Security sector governance is a concept based on the notion that the purpose of the security sector is to provide a public service, and thus it should adhere to certain key principles. These are:⁹
 - **Accountability:** security institutions are held accountable to the populations they serve through independent oversight mechanisms that assess whether the institutions are fulfilling their mandate, and that can enforce remedial action if they are not.
 - **Transparency:** those affected by decision-making processes can access information on how decisions are made.
 - **Rule of law:** security sector institutions and their staff contribute to the impartial and consistent enforcement of laws, as well as international and national human rights standards (which they are well informed about), when it comes to fulfilling their respective missions but also in the management of the workplace itself. This includes laws and norms related to gender equality and non-discrimination.
 - **Participation:** all men and women are able to participate meaningfully in both decision-making processes and in service provision on an equitable and inclusive basis, either directly or through legitimate representatives.
 - **Responsiveness:** institutions actively identify and respond to the different needs of diverse women, men, girls and boys and reflect a culture of public service.
 - **Effectiveness:** institutions maintain high professional standards in the provision of their services.
 - **Efficiency:** institutions fulfil their mandate in a way that makes the best use of available public resources.
9. Applying the principles of security sector governance to ammunition TLM involves adapting regulations and procedures on how security institutions should manage ammunition. It also entails creating structures that allow internal and external management and oversight actors to hold ammunition management personnel accountable for properly implementing these regulations, and to ensure that existing procedures remain effective and efficient.
10. Management actors can include institutions that host ammunition facilities, national coordination agencies, and the relevant ministries and government actors that are ultimately responsible for funding and running ammunition facilities. Oversight actors can be internal, such as officials in the chain of command and units with supervisory or monitoring functions, including institutional human resources, operational planning, training and organizational change departments. Some institutions also have internal auditors or investigators. External oversight actors include state bodies such as parliaments, the justice sector, special statutory oversight institutions; national human rights institutions, which may be state or non-state; and non-state actors such as civil society organisations, academia, labour unions, media and even individual citizens.

⁷ LeBrun, Emile. 2021. [Gender-sensitive Ammunition Management Processes: Considerations for National Authorities](#). New York: United Nations, p. 8, 10; Čarapić et al. 2018, pp.52, 76.

⁸ See, for example, Yazgi, Simon, Hardy Giezendanner and Himayu Shiotani. 2020. [Addressing conventional arms risks and impacts to prevent conflict and build peace: What more should the United Nations do?](#) Geneva: UNIDIR.

⁹ Chappuis, Fairlie. 2015. [‘Security Sector Governance: Applying the principles of good governance to the security sector.’](#) SSR Background. Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, p.3.

The link between principles security sector governance and ammunition through-life management

11. UNIDIR defines Weapon and Ammunition Management (WAM) as:¹⁰

‘the oversight, accountability and management of arms and ammunition throughout their lifecycle, including establishment of frameworks, processes and practices for safe and secure materiel acquisition, stockpiling, transfers, tracing and disposal.’

12. Oversight and accountability are central components of both SSG and of WAM. National authorities are responsible for ensuring good governance in WAM. This can be achieved by developing coordinated ammunition management systems where the role and responsibilities of each actor are clearly assigned, chains of accountability are established and internal oversight mechanisms are identified.¹¹

13. The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) module 01.35 on Organisational Capabilities provides guidance for the through-life management of ammunition. It takes a systems approach comprising three components, namely process phases, functional roles and capability enabling lines. The IATGs also recognise the political and legal dimensions of TLM:¹²

‘The national authority should establish an ammunition management process that ensures that ammunition is managed from planning to decommissioning. ... The TLM process may involve political and legal decisions, especially with regard to the allocation and release of financial resources.’

14. Civilian actors have an important part to play in these political and legal decisions. For example, parliamentarians approve budgets and review spending related to ammunition management. They also engage in strategic decision-making processes related to the acquisition of new types of ammunition and the sale or donation of surplus ammunition to other states.¹³ Civil society organisations draw the government’s attention to, and ensure accountability in, cases where UEMS, ammunition diversion or environmental contamination negatively impact the civilian population.¹⁴ It is thus vital that ammunition management systems are transparent to the point that parliamentarians and civil society can perform this important external oversight role.

15. The new Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management could elaborate on how states can draw from the principles of security sector governance to develop nationally appropriate decision-making and oversight mechanisms for TLM. These would apply to each of the process phases outlined by the IATG module 01.35:

16. *Planning*: In the planning phase, national authorities develop ammunition stockpile plans to reflect desired operational capabilities and, on this basis, define the requirements for procurement, utilisation and decommissioning.¹⁵ One example of how SSG would apply to this phase could include the engagement of parliamentarians and civil society in strategic discussions on the requirements for procurement (e.g. that all eligible suppliers have gender equality and non-discrimination policies) and decommissioning (e.g. that potential negative impacts on civilians and the environment are identified and mitigated.)

17. *Procurement*: In the procurement phase, equipment types, quantities and attributes (such as markings) are identified, suppliers are selected, the equipment is delivered, checked, registered and, if necessary, users are trained.¹⁶ One example of how SSG would apply to this phase could be to identify internal oversight mechanisms to ensure that the procurement process adheres to the needs outlined in the procurement plan as well as relevant legal frameworks, such as anti-corruption measures.

¹⁰ de Tessieres, Savannah. 2019. [*The Role of Weapon and Ammunition Management in Preventing Conflict and Supporting Security Transitions*](#). Geneva: UNIDIR.

¹¹ UN SaferGuard. 2021. ‘[International Ammunition Technical Guidelines 01.35: Organisational Capabilities](#).’ Third ed, March 2021. New York: UNODA, p.5; Giezendanner, Hardy and Himayu Shiotani. 2021. [A Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments](#). Geneva: UNIDIR, p. 42.

¹² UN SaferGuard. 2021, p.2.

¹³ Giezendanner and Shiotani, 2021, pp. 26, 57.

¹⁴ Giezendanner and Shiotani, 2021, p. 27.

¹⁵ UN SaferGuard. 2021, pp.2-3.

¹⁶ UN SaferGuard. 2021, p.3.

18. *Utilisation*: The utilisation phase refers to both the supply of ammunition to users and the management and maintenance of stockpiles.¹⁷ One example of how SSG would apply to this phase could be to ensure transparent record keeping relating to how much ammunition is stored and where, as well as the condition of the ammunition and its storage facilities. This allows the internal chain of accountability to identify cases of diversion and hold those responsible to account.
19. *Decommissioning*: The decommissioning phase refers to the discarding of obsolete, expired or surplus ammunition.¹⁸ One example of how SSG would apply to this phase could include internal environmental impact assessments of ammunition destruction practices to ensure that they conform to national environmental regulations, or parliamentary scrutiny of plans to donate or sell surplus ammunition to other states.
20. The Capability Enabling Lines (CEL) in TLM describe ‘the cross-sectional functions of an organisation (e.g. Ministry of defense) that must be brought together to integrate goods into the existing organisation and ensure the delivery of a capability.’¹⁹ In this way, the TLM model recognises that ensuring the safety and security of ammunition has both technical and governance aspects, and that both of these should be considered across the eight CELs, namely ‘doctrine and concepts, organisation, training, material, personnel, finances, infrastructure, and safety and security’.²⁰ SSG principles such as accountability, transparency, participation and effectiveness are relevant to all of the CELs.
21. Security sector governance principles can also be applied across the different functional roles of TLM: planning, acquisition or procurement, logistics, safety and security, surveillance and user. From an SSG perspective, parliamentarians as well as civil society, academia, research institutions and industry would have important contributions to supporting and overseeing the planning role as well as the safety and security role.

Summary of recommendations to the OEWG

- i. Recognise that internal oversight actors are essential to good governance, which is a key aspect of ammunition through-life management and thus the effective implementation of the future Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management.
- ii. Recognise the important role played by external oversight actors such as parliamentarians and civil society in the ammunition through-life management, especially in the planning phase and in responding to flaws in ammunition management that may result in unplanned explosions at munitions sites, diversion and environmental contamination.
- iii. Underscore that transparency and accountability is a pre-requisite to developing innovative and effective solutions to gaps and challenges related to ammunition management in cooperation with civil society, academia, research institutions and industry.
- iv. Reflect principles of security sector governance, namely accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency throughout the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management and in future international cooperation and assistance efforts.

¹⁷ UN SaferGuard. 2021, p.4.

¹⁸ UN SaferGuard. 2021, pp.4-5.

¹⁹ UN SaferGuard. 2021. p.1.

²⁰ UN SaferGuard. 2021. p.1.