The work on sustainable cooperation and assistance by the 2008 Group of Governmental Experts

1. In 2008, a Group of Governmental Experts was established pursuant to resolution 61/72 to consider further steps to enhance cooperation with regard to the issue of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. This 2008 GGE recognised that inappropriately located, poorly managed or insecure national stockpiles of ammunition can present an imminent threat to local communities and a security threat to societies and, ultimately, to national, regional and international security.\(^1\) Despite the importance of the matter, the 2008 GGE noted that the issue of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus had received limited international attention\(^2\) and therefore concluded that States should strengthen their support for projects and programmes to improve stockpile management.\(^3\)

2. The 2008 GGE recommended to address stockpile management issues in a comprehensive manner\(^4\) as this is the only long-term means for States to minimise the safety and security risks.\(^5\) In this regard, the GGE endorsed a whole life management approach.\(^6\) Building on this recognition, the 2008 GGE elaborated extensively on the basic components of an effective stockpile management system, ranging from national stockpile management planning to stockpile destruction.

3. Since 2008, ammunition management has gained greater acknowledgement and attention. As a result, cooperation and assistance has increased noticeably. Cooperation and assistance in the safe and secure ammunition management is currently often provided in the form of destruction of ammunition, in physical upgrades of storage areas or in training. These elements are essential in ensuring proper ammunition management and are critical to reducing risks of diversion of stockpiled ammunition and unintended explosions at munitions sites in the immediacy.

4. The safety and security risks related to inadequate ammunition management cannot, however, be tackled merely at the technical level. The 2008 GGE rightly recognised that risks can be significantly reduced by \textit{inter alia} enhancing capacity-building and the development of appropriate ammunition management systems.\(^7\) The focus of its report did, however, not address specifically the national capabilities required to achieve sustainability, including through cooperation and assistance, in the safe and secure management of ammunition.

Underlying elements enhancing the sustainability in cooperation and assistance activities

5. Through the implementation of cooperation and assistance activities over the last decade, a more holistic and complete understanding of the necessity to integrate elements to

\(^1\) A/63/182, para 5.
\(^2\) Ibid., para 3.
\(^3\) Ibid., para 64.
\(^4\) Ibid., para 66.
\(^5\) Ibid., para 19.
\(^6\) Ibid., para 20 and 58.
\(^7\) Ibid., para 15.
enhance sustainability has emerged. Sustainability can be understood as the capacity of a State to continuously perform a set of tasks (whose performance was acquired through cooperation activities) at the desired level without external support.

6. While the provision of adequate (i.e. meeting local needs) and effective (i.e. target-oriented) assistance requires a proper assessment by recipient and donor States, the performance at the desired level implies establishing a system in the recipient State’s organisation that generates sustainability in and oversight over the technical activities. Beside the engagement of interested States in this respect, the recent establishment of the Ammunition Management Advisory Team (AMAT) is an important additional measure to support States in this regard.

7. The sustainability of ammunition management and thereby of cooperation and assistance rests on organizational capabilities. These aspects involve three elements: processes, functional roles and the presence or development of capability enabling lines.

8. An ammunition management system should include a process that ensures that ammunition is managed from planning to decommissioning. The whole life management process can be divided into four phases: (1) planning, (2) procurement, (3) utilisation and (4) decommissioning, which all encompass a set of activities. This process runs as a cycle since the decommissioning of some type of ammunition has to be assessed in the planning process to evaluate if it creates new gaps that need to be filled. Additionally, costs and measures for the decommissioning have to be integrated in the planning phase.

9. There is no one-size-fits-all model regarding how an organisation should be structured. Organisational structures are a national prerogative and generally culminate from respective countries' historical contexts, strategies and processes. Some essential roles, however, need to be reflected in the structure of the ammunition management organisation. These roles include (1) the planning role, (2) the acquisition or procurement role, (3) the logistics role, (4) the safety and security role, (5) the surveillance role and (6) the user role. Specific tasks are associated with each role. Anchoring these roles within the ammunition management organisation ensures that responsibilities for all tasks for the process are allocated.

10. In order to use ammunition over its life span, it needs to be integrated into the broader functioning of an organisation. This can be broken down in eight capability enabling lines (CELs): (1) doctrine and concepts, (2) organisation, (3) training, (4) material, (5) personnel, (6) finances, (7) infrastructure (real estate and information technology) and (8) security and safety. CELs are not solely related to ammunition management but to the management of any type of equipment. They are constantly evolving as a factor of threats and hazards, changes in policy, laws and the environment, technological developments, new capability requirements, modified resources etc. CELs focus on comprehensive development and management rather than on single cases.

11. Establishing or further strengthening these organisational capabilities requires a comprehensive approach at the State's procedural and structural level. If cooperation and assistance is to be sustainable, the safe and secure management of ammunition may therefore benefit from a more holistic perspective on the effectiveness of the State institutions and their governance. Such a holistic perspective ensures that improving and sustaining the safe and secure management of ammunition is further embedded into broader efforts by the international community towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG targets 16.6 and 16.A.

Conclusion

12. This Working Paper notes that the 2008 GGE primarily considered and recommended improvements at the technical level of ammunition management, including through cooperation and assistance. In particular, this has resulted in the development of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and the improvement of knowledge resource management within the United Nations system. The strategic aspects of sustainability
were not considered to the same depth and, therefore, have since not been adequately taken into account in cooperation and assistance.

13. This Working Paper underlines the importance of enhancing sustainability in the field of international cooperation and assistance, building on a comprehensive understanding thereof that has emerged since 2008. It argues that sustainability can be achieved if organisational capabilities are successfully anchored in the recipient State’s institutional set-up. It further argues that, with regard to a long-term perspective, the focus of donor States, implementing partners and recipient States should further shift towards more sustainable, effective and efficient assistance, in keeping with the recognition by Member States of the need for appropriate national ammunition management structures and procedures.⁸ Such a focus does not challenge the importance of immediate risk mitigation measures in the short term.

14. Such organisational capabilities do not need to be established or fully functioning necessarily before cooperation and assistance activities are initiated. The Working Paper rather proposes that the existence, status and performance of these capabilities be assessed at the very beginning of cooperation and assistance activities. Establishing a baseline thereof will assist in identifying measures to complement or strengthen them as appropriate. While donor States may support recipient States in performing the necessary baseline assessments and advise on institution building efforts during the project, it is the recipient State’s responsibility to effectively develop these national capabilities.

4. Recommendations

15. This Working Paper recommends that the following aspects should be considered in relation with cooperation and assistance:

- The achievement of sustainability should be a driving factor in cooperation and assistance activities and become a primary objective of donor States, implementing partners and recipient States;

- Organisational capabilities play an essential role in the implementation of sustainable cooperation and assistance efforts;

- States and organisations engaging in cooperation and assistance activities are encouraged to conduct a baseline assessment of these key capabilities and cooperate towards strengthening them as an overall priority;

- The Ammunition Management Advisory Team should support interested States to strengthen these key capabilities through the provision of its services;

- The strengthening of these key capabilities is more likely to be successful if strong national ownership is provided for;

- Sustainability in cooperation and assistance in ammunition management is more likely to be successful if approached as part of broader efforts aimed at improving the effectiveness and governance of State’s institutions;

- The links between sustainable ammunition management and security sector governance deserve further scrutiny at policy level, within the United Nations as well as in the formulation of UN mandates.

⁸ A/RES/74/65, PP18; A/RES/72/55, PP16.