



**Statement to the Security Council
Threats to International Peace and Security**

**Statement by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**

As delivered



New York
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Madame President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have been requested to brief on the issue of “supplies of lethal weapons to Ukraine and their consequences”. This follows a similar briefing I provided in September to the Security Council.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, a number of States have transferred weapons systems and ammunition to Ukraine for its defence forces. This, as I noted in September, is a matter of public record. Information from Governments regarding their transfers is largely accessible through open sources. Such transfers have included heavy conventional weapons, including battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, missile systems, uncrewed combat aerial vehicles, as well as small arms and light weapons.

There have also been widespread and independently verified reports of the transfer of major conventional weapon systems to non-state armed groups involved in the conflict against Ukraine, including artillery rocket systems.

The large-scale influx of weapons into any situation of armed conflict raises many concerns for peace and security, including risks of diversion as well as potential spillover and escalation. Measures to counter the potential diversion of weapons and ammunition will be key to post-conflict recovery and regional security and stability, as well as to conflict prevention in other regions. Such measures include pre-transfer risk assessments and post-shipment controls, including on-site inspections and end-user verification. Of equal importance is the need to safeguard and account for transferred military equipment. To enhance transparency in arms transfers, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms remains a key tool as does the Arms Trade Treaty. It is also an important tool to track the influx of weapons and ammunition in conflict zones. These are all widely accepted general policy approaches by Member States, which we encourage all to follow.

Madame President,

Beyond addressing arms transfers, all parties to conflict have a duty to protect civilians when conducting military operations.

Since 24 February, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded 17,181 civilian casualties with the numbers incessantly rising. Most of the civilian deaths and injuries continue to be caused by the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects, including attacks by heavy artillery, multiple launch rocket systems, missiles and aircraft.

In addition to thousands of civilians killed and injured, we have witnessed the destruction of civilian and critical infrastructure and services, especially using missiles and uncrewed aerial vehicles. Aside from homes, schools, roads, and bridges destroyed, hospitals and health facilities have also been impacted. The disruption of water, gas, heating and electricity caused by Russian attacks on energy infrastructure is of particular concern with the onset of winter bringing a new dimension to the humanitarian crisis and putting millions of people at risk.

Under international humanitarian law, combatants must not direct attacks against civilians or civilian infrastructure and must take all feasible precautions in the conduct of military operations to avoid, or at least minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects.

Since 2007, two Secretary-Generals have expressed their serious concerns over the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons in populated areas. They have consistently called upon parties to conflict to avoid their use due to the high likelihood of indiscriminate effects.

Last month, on 18 November, more than 80 States adopted the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. This Declaration marks a milestone in our efforts to better protect civilians from the consequences of armed conflict. I call on Member States to give effect to this declaration.

The past nine months have seen tremendous devastation – much as a result of the use of heavy conventional weapons. Attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure must stop.

I also urge States to apply effective arms control measures to address the risks related to arms transfers. I want to reiterate: preventing diversion of supplied weapons and ammunition is essential to avoid fueling conflict and insecurity in the region and beyond.

Madame President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

The only way to end the suffering and devastation in Ukraine is by ending the war. I appeal to all Member States to make every effort for peace.

I thank you very much for your attention.