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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 946th MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO--OPERATION**

13 May 2020

On small arms and light weapons, stockpiles of conventional ammunition and mine clearance

The European Union and its Member States thank the speakers for joining this meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) and for their presentations, which have enabled us to enhance our knowledge of the practical work being done in this field.

The uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and of their ammunition is a major security and development issue, as is made clear by target 16.4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for arms flows to be significantly reduced by 2030. In adopting a new strategy against illicit firearms, SALW and their ammunition on 19 November 2018, the EU has acknowledged the importance of this issue.

The EU and its Member States fully support the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the next biennial meeting on which is meant to take place in June 2020 and will focus on combating diversion. The EU similarly supports the full implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, to which all its Member States are party. Moreover, we welcome the work being carried out within the UN framework by the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus, which was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/55.

The EU also supports various OSCE activities aimed at improving the control of SALW and their ammunition in Ukraine, the Republic of North Macedonia, Georgia and Moldova, for example. Lastly, since the start of 2020 the EU has been playing a greater role in steering and following up on the implementation of the regional Roadmap aimed at strengthening the co-ordination of efforts to combat illicit firearms trafficking in the Western Balkans by 2024. We welcome the contribution that the OSCE, following the example of several other international organizations and donors, is making to the implementation of this Roadmap.

At the same time, we congratulate the FSC Chairmanship for having chosen to focus today's Security Dialogue on mine action, which is a topic that enjoys less visibility within the Forum but is nonetheless very important.

We note, in particular, the importance of this topic for Ukraine. Indeed, within this same venue in early December last year we cited the thematic report of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine

(SMM) on the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance on the civilian population in the conflict area. That report, whose quality we greatly appreciate, clearly demonstrated the harmful effects of the many mines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices on civilians. They were the cause of one-third of the confirmed civilian casualties during the reporting period, that is, from January 2018 onwards. We lament the fact that these explosive objects have been responsible for numerous victims among children, killed or injured in tragic circumstances. The EU is supporting demining operations and victim assistance in eastern Ukraine through various projects. We reiterate our gratitude to the SMM for the essential work it is performing in monitoring the situation and raising the awareness of the local population in the risk zone.

The EU fervently advocates the universal prohibition of anti-personnel mines. All of its Member States have acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, and we urge those States that have not yet done so to join the Convention without delay or to apply its provisions on an interim basis. We call on all stakeholders to refrain from the production, stockpiling, trade in and transfer of anti-personnel mines, and firmly condemn their use anywhere, at any time and by any actors, whether States or non-State actors.

Mr. Chairperson,

The EU and its Member States reaffirm their strong commitment to supporting efforts aimed at countering the threats posed by anti-personnel mines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. The EU and its Member States are the principal donors of assistance for mine action. In the course of the past five years, more than 500 million euros have been disbursed in support of mine action in over 30 countries, with assistance being provided in such diverse areas as demining, risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction, capacity-building, and research and development on mine detection and demining. The EU is currently supporting mine action in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, Turkey and Ukraine. In Ukraine, the EU and its Member States are also supporting the HALO Trust and the Danish Demining Group in providing assistance to the communities affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine through humanitarian demining and livelihood support. Additionally, we are helping mine-affected countries to set up or update national strategies for mine clearance and victim assistance, in close co-operation with the UN and other donors and stakeholders. We would remind you that mine clearance is very difficult and demanding work, which could not be accomplished without the commitment and courage of mine-clearing experts from all across the world. We will always support this work.

We appreciate the OSCE's role in supporting mine action at various levels – for example, by strengthening the norms and principles of the participating States and by identifying, developing and implementing practical measures through assistance projects (as is currently the case, for example, in Tajikistan and Ukraine).

We subscribe to the view that mine action is closely linked to the concepts of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Accordingly, the OSCE, through its mine action activities, can play an important part in terms of confidence- and security-building measures during the different phases of the conflict cycle where these involve the presence of landmines and unexploded or abandoned explosive ordnance, including improvised explosive devices.

We encourage participating States to step up their application of the shared norms and principles in this field, particularly through the use of Best Practice Guides and also through practical measures to support the States most affected.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank you for having provided us with an opportunity to discuss this important topic.

Thank you for your attention. I would kindly ask you to attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

The candidate countries North Macedonia², Montenegro² and Albania², the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as the Republic of Moldova and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

2 North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.