



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°938 Vienna, 22 January 2020**

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#### **EU Statement on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition/ Mine Action**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the speakers to the Forum for Security Co-operation. We congratulate the FSC Chairmanship both on the choice of the focus of today's debate, i.e. mine action, an area that is less visible in the FSC but nevertheless highly important, and on the selection of the countries used as examples to illustrate the gravity of the problem. We thank the speakers for their presentations which allowed us to gain more knowledge about the practical work in the field.

In the beginning of December last year in this forum we referred to the thematic report by the SMM on the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance on the civilian population in the conflict area. The report, which we highly value, clearly demonstrated the harmful effects of the many mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive objects on civilians. They were the cause of one third of the confirmed civilian casualties during the reporting period, i.e. since January 2018. Deplorably, many victims were children, killed or injured from explosive objects found in gardens or fields while playing. This year has also unfortunately started with reports of the first civilian casualties resulting from mines or other explosive devices. Let us once again express our gratitude to the SMM for the work they are doing in monitoring the situation and in raising the awareness of the local population in the conflict area of the risk of landmines and explosive devices. This is vital to ensure confidence and security building.

The EU is a strong supporter of the universal ban on anti-personnel mines. We appeal to all actors to refrain from the production, stockpiling, trade and transfer of anti-personnel mines and strongly condemn their use anywhere, at any time, or by

any actor, whether States or non-State actors. All EU Member States have joined the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and we urge States that have not yet done so to join it without delay, or, as an interim step, to comply with the norms of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman, the EU and its Member States reaffirm their strong commitment to support actions addressing the threats of anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, including improvised explosive devices. The EU and its Member States are major donors for mine action assistance. In the past five years, more than EUR 500 million have been committed for mine action assistance in over 30 mine affected countries, providing assistance in various areas ranging from mine clearance, risk education, victims' assistance, stockpile destruction, capacity building, to research and development on mine detection and clearance. The EU is currently supporting mine action in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey and Ukraine. In Ukraine, the EU and its Member States are also supporting the HALO Trust and the Danish Demining Group in their assistance to the conflict-affected populations of eastern Ukraine through humanitarian mine clearance and livelihood support. We also help mine affected countries to set up or update national strategies for mine clearance and victim assistance, in close cooperation with the United Nations, and other donors and stakeholders. We should always remember that this is very difficult and demanding work which could not be achieved without the determination and courage of deminers all around the world, who we will always support.

We appreciate the role of the OSCE in support of mine action at various levels, for example by strengthening norms and principles of the participating States and by identifying, developing and implementing practical measures through individual OSCE projects (currently for example in Tajikistan and in Ukraine).

We share the view that mine action is closely interlinked with the concepts of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. Therefore, the OSCE with its mine action considerations can play an important role in terms of confidence and security building measures during these different stages of the "conflict cycle" related to the presence of landmines and unexploded or abandoned ordnance, including improvised explosive devices.

We encourage participating States to consider a further strengthening of joint norms and principles in this area, including through best practice guides as well as practical measures in support of the most affected States.

Mr. Chairman, we thank you for the opportunity to exchange perspectives on this important topic. Thank you for your attention.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA, and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.