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REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

**PERMANENT MISSION
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CYPRUS
on Mental Health Impacts of War

89th Joint Meeting of the Forum for Security Cooperation and the Permanent Council
Vienna, November 8, 2023

Cyprus fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. Please allow us to also add some comments in our national capacity.

At the outset, we would like to congratulate the Chairs for bringing this important topic to the joint FSC - PC, as well as the distinguished Panelists for their detailed presentations and expertise.

The decision to elaborate on mental health impacts of war, could not have been more relevant and timely, taking into account the current security situation in the OSCE area and our immediate neighbourhood, including the war of aggression against Ukraine, the mass exodus of Armenians from Nagorno - Karabakh and the increasingly worrisome situation in the Middle East.

Consequently, it is evident that the OSCE and we as participating states need to start thinking of tangible steps in incorporating this highly important issue in our comprehensive concept of security across both the 1st and 3rd dimension. Sharing of best practices with a view to putting in place national strategies, on how to address trauma and mental health issues, with the aim of reducing and alleviating the psychosocial impacts of armed conflict, would be of utmost importance.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949, to which the Republic of Cyprus has acceded, include clear provisions concerning the protection of vulnerable groups and civilians during armed conflicts. Such protection should of course also include mental health and psychological support, in order to mitigate stress, depression, and post - traumatic disorders for both civilians and armed forces personnel. To this end we should commend Organisations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in providing mental health and psychosocial support services and programmes to all those affected by conflicts.

In this respect Cyprus is no stranger to the mental health impacts of war, being a victim of foreign aggression and taking into consideration the relevant traumatic experiences that our own people have been through for 50 years, both military personnel and civilians .

Thus, it is evident that today's deliberations provide a unique opportunity to assess how past and current armed conflicts, bear a negative impact on the health of affected communities and individuals and

especially on women, children and vulnerable groups, bearing in mind that mental health effects can persist for years after the end of hostilities.

In conclusion, we would like to congratulate the Chairs once again for bringing this important issue to the forefront of our discussions and thank the distinguished panelists for their valuable contribution.

Thank you,