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**STATEMENT BY  
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1055th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

20 September 2023

**On mine action**

Madam Chairperson,

The European Union and its Member States thank the speakers for their presentations on the important and particularly relevant topic of anti-personnel mines, booby traps and explosive remnants of war.

For 19 months now, a brutal and illegal war of aggression has been unleashed by Russia against Ukraine and against the European peace order with the support of the Belarusian regime. Against this backdrop, it is important to recall the human devastation and tremendous security risks caused by the contamination of territories by such devices, which constitute a major threat to civilian populations and particularly to children.

The indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines and booby traps thus amounts to a violation of international humanitarian law, for which the perpetrators will have to answer. We should be discussing demining here, but Russia continues to go in the other direction. The Russian war of aggression today has resulted in the creation of a minefield estimated by the Ukrainian authorities to be almost 250,000 square kilometres in size, which would make it the largest minefield in the world. The mine-clearance process alone will take decades and cost billions of euros, as we have seen in the Western Balkan States or in the South Caucasus. As estimated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), from 24 February 2022 to 30 June 2023 there were 905 verified cases of civilian casualties in Ukraine, including 293 killed, as a result of the explosion of mines and explosive remnants of war. That being said, the OHCHR believes that the actual figures are considerably higher. Moreover, we emphasize the particular vulnerability of children. According to the same report, 75 children have been killed or injured in Ukraine by landmines and unexploded ordnance.

Given the growing number of casualties caused by these weapons every year, we shall not slacken in our efforts to combat them.

In the face of these challenges, all Member States of the European Union have joined the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention – the Ottawa Convention – and we urge those States that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention without delay or to apply its provisions on an interim basis, as several of our international partners have been doing.

The European Union supports the efforts to promote the universalization and full implementation of Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), on the use of mines, booby traps and other devices. It likewise supports Protocol V of the CCW, which defines the responsibilities of States with regard to the clearance, removal and destruction of explosive remnants of war and promotes the development of co-operation and assistance in that area.

The European Union and its Member States are among the principal donors of assistance for mine action. During the past five years, over 500 million euros have been allocated in support of mine action in more than 30 countries, including several OSCE participating States. The European Union and its Member States are contributing to the development of national strategies for mine clearance and victim assistance. The European Union is providing 43 million euros to support humanitarian mine action in Ukraine. This includes 25 million euros for demining projects in the liberated territories, as announced by EU High Representative Josep Borrell in February 2023. The European Union and its Member States are thus active in the various aspects of humanitarian demining: the supply of equipment, the training of Ukrainian mine-clearing personnel, the on-site deployment of experts and the funding of non-governmental organizations on the ground.

We appreciate the OSCE's role and the work of the Conflict Prevention Centre, along with that of the OSCE's field operations, in supporting mine action at various levels – for example, by strengthening participating States' norms and principles and by identifying, developing and implementing practical measures through assistance projects. Co-operation must take into account humanitarian demining as a driver of development, giving priority to community-based demining and training activities aimed at strengthening the local capacities of the affected countries, in particular risk education programmes for children who might not be aware of the dangers posed by anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance or the explosive remnants of war. This is a major issue because according to the 2022 Landmine Monitor report, half of the people killed or maimed in 2021 were children.

Mine-clearance activities must therefore also be accompanied by support for the victims. It is for that reason that risk education and psychosocial support are indispensable.

The European Union is financially supporting and promoting the implementation of the OSCE Support Programme for Ukraine in the area of capacity-building for humanitarian demining – a project that will focus mainly on the economic and environmental issues arising from contamination by mines.

Furthermore, the European Union calls for the role of women in efforts to address explosive remnants of war to be strengthened. Increasing women's participation in mine-clearance activities, but also their involvement in risk education programmes, helps to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these activities and to achieve better results in the long term.

Madam Chairperson, we thank you for having provided us with an opportunity for exchanges on this important topic. We hope that this Security Dialogue will make it possible to maintain a momentum of co-operation consistent with the challenges confronting us now and in the future. In conclusion, we therefore appeal to all States to make a concerted effort to combat the scourge of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices so as to protect our populations.

Thank you.

The candidate countries North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Albania<sup>1</sup>, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>1</sup>, the potential candidate country Georgia, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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