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EU statement on International and national Experience of the OSCE pS in the field of management of stockpiles of conventional ammunition and destruction of its surplus

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the speakers to the Forum for Security Co-operation, and thank them for their interesting presentations. We commend the Russian FSC Chair for convening a meeting on management of stockpiles of conventional ammunition and destruction of its surplus with a special focus on BiH. We see this meeting as an important follow-up to the 2016 MC declaration on SALW and SCA assistance projects, an important area of OSCE's contribution to stability and security in the OSCE region.

Much progress has been made within the OSCE to reduce and secure stockpiles since the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition was adopted in 2003, yet the demand for illicit weapons and their ammunition has continued, even as the conflict dynamics have evolved. At the same time, new tools, such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGS) have been developed to help the international community address the challenge of diversion. We therefore welcome this opportunity to share experiences on addressing this issue at the international, regional and national levels.

The EU is fully committed to the implementation of the OSCE Plan of Action, the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Programme of Action on SALW and IATGS on a national, regional and global basis. Such an approach is fully in line with the 2005 EU Strategy to combat illicit accumulation and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), as is demonstrated by ongoing contributions by the EU and its Member States to the SALW/SCA projects implemented by the OSCE and other organisations. Furthermore, as we mentioned at the FSC meeting on 17 May, the

Ministers of the 28 EU Member States adopted the new Firearms Directive on 25 April 2017, which provides for more rigorous controls on the acquisition and possession of weapons, in particular to prevent its abuse by criminal groups and terrorists. The main aim of the EU policy is to prevent the trafficking of small arms, light weapons and ammunition. In the same vein, illicit arms trafficking by sea is a matter of utmost importance within the EU, as it is shown by the intention of several EU Member States to table in the FSC a Draft Decision on the “Prevention of illicit trafficking of SALW and/or ammunitions by sea.

We welcome the OSCE’s prominent role in providing assistance to participating States with regard to physical security and stockpile management and surplus destruction of SALW and their ammunition. Such activities contribute to mitigating the risk that SALW and ammunition are diverted and may contribute to terrorism and crime, and are thus fully in line with the efforts of the European Union and its Member States. To this end, the EU and its Member States provide generous support to various SALW/SCA projects across the OSCE region, be it bilaterally, or multilaterally through cooperation with partners such as the OSCE or SEESAC. In addition, the EU has supported the ITrace project aimed at increasing global understanding of weapons and ammunition diversion trends and a recent workshop on the impact on new technology on marking and tracing ammunition. Both of these initiatives are a contribution to the wider international efforts to develop more comprehensive and sustainable stockpile management and counter-diversion frameworks, in order to tackle the illicit trafficking which is multi-faceted.

Most recently, the EU support for SEESAC activities was extended for the period 2017-2019 by providing an additional EUR 6.5 million (*Council decision 2016/2356*), also covering BiH. The overall objective of these activities is increased regional cooperation, improved capacity for PSSM through infrastructure upgrades, surplus reduction and training, enhanced capacity for marking, tracing and record keeping, and reduced illicit possession and misuse of firearms through support for awareness raising and collection campaigns. We also supported a project on explosive ordnance and remnants of war destruction in BiH (EXPLODE), which was implemented in close co-operation with SEESAC. A report describing our global and regional actions to

combat the illicit trafficking of SALW and surplus ammunition was published in April this year (*Official Journal of the EU, 2017/C 115/01*).

In this context we would be interested in the speaker's views on how the OSCE cooperates and co-ordinates on politico-military issues with other national and international partners in BiH and how these relationships could be enhanced. At the same time, we believe that meetings such as this in the FSC can be conducive in this regard.

Mr. Chairman, the European Union and BiH have a strong relationship, reinforced through our Stabilisation and Association Agreement. The Agreement has intensified our partnership, increasing our cooperation in some areas and consolidating it in others. The Association Agenda details commitments undertaken by the BiH authorities, including progress made. Further work is needed, and on this path BiH can count on the European Union, on our common work, for the sake of our citizens.

In this context, we once again thank the Chair for providing us with the opportunity to exchange views on this important topic.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA as well as GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.