



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Forum for Security Cooperation:**

*Small Arms and Light Weapons / Stockpiles of  
Conventional Ammunition - Mine Action  
May 13, 2020*

Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for keeping the very important topic of Small Arms and Light Weapons and mine action at the top of the FSC agenda, and thank you to Deputy Minister Petrenko and Deputy Minister Voda for sharing your perspectives. Rest assured Deputy Minister Petrenko, that the United States fully endorses your call to restore control of its international border with Russia to Ukraine.

I will focus my statement today on mine action. As we are all acutely aware, mines, unexploded ordinance and all explosive remnants of war remain a very real security problem in the OSCE region and indiscriminately kill innocent civilians during conflicts and long after they end.

Mr. Chairperson, the Russia-instigated and led conflict in eastern Ukraine has resulted in extensive landmine and unexploded ordinance contamination across eastern Ukraine. This poses a daily danger and deadly threat to the innocent civilian population that lives inside the conflict area.

According to the Special Monitoring Mission's December 2019 thematic report, 35% of all civilian casualties in the conflict zone in eastern Ukraine are attributed to land mines, unexploded ordinance or other explosive devices. This figure unfortunately includes more than 30 children. In addition to indiscriminately killing innocent civilians, mines are an ongoing challenge for the SMM sometimes with deadly consequences, as in the tragic loss of American monitor Joseph Stone.

To counter their deadly effects, since 2016, the United States has provided more than \$5.5 million dollars through the HALO Trust, the OSCE, and the Danish Demining Group for battle area clearance of mines and unexploded ordinance in eastern Ukraine and to build Ukraine's own humanitarian demining capacity. The

United States continues to support the OSCE's Humanitarian Mine Action Project for Ukraine and is pleased with its extension through December 2021. In addition to previous U.S. funding, I am pleased to announce the United States is committing an additional \$800,000 dollars to cover costs of the extension period. We call on other participating States to help support the critical work of the Project Coordinator Unit in Kyiv alongside the United States. This work encompasses capacity building, advising Ukraine on establishing a national authority in humanitarian mine action, and mine risk education programs. The unit also coordinates relevant mine action stakeholders, including a variety of international organizations and NGOs, and is expanding an information management system for mine action training to organize data on geographical areas contaminated by landmines and the explosive remnants of war.

In 2019, the United States deployed eight battle area clearance teams across eastern Ukraine, returning almost 340,000 square meters or 84 acres of land back to local communities. The United States also funded 94 mine risk education sessions in such communities. An additional four Ukrainian State Emergency Services battle area clearance teams also deployed with U.S. assistance.

Mr. Chairperson, despite all these efforts by the United States and the international community, innocent civilians in eastern Ukraine, including children, continue to live under the deadly threat of land mines and unexploded ordinance. We call on all sides to "map, mark, and demine" in line with the Tri-lateral Contact Group decision on mine action and to commit to a lasting ceasefire. More significant mine clearance and removal of unexploded ordinance can only be safely conducted under peaceful conditions.

Mr. Chairperson,

In addition to our mine action efforts, the United States continues to serve as lead nation of the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund, which seeks to reduce excess munitions in Partnership for Peace countries to improve security and mitigate the risk of unplanned depot explosions. Since 2004, the United States invested almost \$50 million in conventional weapons destruction programs for small arms and light weapons and ammunition destruction in Ukraine. Through the NATO Support and Procurement Agency, the United States directly funded the demilitarization of more than 370 metric tons of munitions in 2019 in Ukraine. Since initiating Phase 2 of the program in Ukraine in 2005, the United States has led the demilitarization of 28,717 metric tons of conventional ammunition and the destruction of 130,100 Small Arms and Light Weapons.

The United States has also assisted Ukraine with incorporating NATO-recognized standards for storing and managing its weapons and ammunition. Through the Trust Fund, the United States and Germany funded an e-management system for ammunition and SALW, which will enhance and modernize the management of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense's strategic weapons and ammunition stockpiles. Moreover, the United States funded the modernization of testing laboratories to enhance the lifecycle maintenance of ammunition and provided equipment to enable hazardous munitions storage in compliance with NATO standards.

Mr. Chairperson, we've taken the opportunity today to highlight our assistance programs in Ukraine for mine clearance and Small Arms and Light Weapons-related programs. These programs are part of our efforts across the OSCE space and worldwide to support humanitarian demining and weapons abatement. Since 1993 the United States has provided more than \$3.7 billion in Conventional Weapons Destruction assistance to more than 100 countries and will continue to be the world's single largest financial supporter of humanitarian efforts to address the impacts of explosive remnants of war and landmines.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.