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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1067th MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

24 January 2024

On humanitarian mine action

Mr. 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 almost two years now, Russia has been waging, with the Belarusian Government's support, a brutal and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and against the European peace order. In this context it is necessary to recall the human losses and the tremendous security risks caused by the contamination of territories by such devices, which constitute a major threat to civilian populations and, in particular, to children. In Ukraine, 116 children were killed or injured by landmines and unexploded ordnance between 24 February 2022 and 19 November 2023.

We regret that anti-personnel mines are still being used in numerous armed conflicts, including within the OSCE area. We will not let up in our efforts to combat this scourge.

Indeed, all the EU Member States have joined the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention). That is why we urge those States that have not yet done so to join the Convention without delay or, as several of our international partners have been doing, to apply its provisions on an interim basis – provisions that have saved countless lives since the Convention's entry into force almost 30 years ago.

The European Union supports the efforts to promote the universalization and full implementation of Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), on the use of mines, booby traps and other devices. It likewise supports Protocol V to the CCW, which defines the responsibilities of States as regards 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 main donors contributing to mine action support. During the past six years, over 800 million euros have been mobilized in support of mine action in more than 30 countries, including several OSCE participating States. The European Union and its Member States are supporting, in particular, the development of national strategies for mine clearance and victim assistance, but also efforts to universalize the Ottawa Convention. The European Union and its Member States are likewise active in the various aspects of humanitarian demining: the supply of equipment,

training, the deployment of on-site 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 field operations, in supporting mine action at various levels – for example, by strengthening participating States' standards and principles and by identifying, developing and implementing practical measures through assistance projects. Co-operation must take humanitarian demining into consideration as an enabler of development, giving priority to community-based mine action and to training activities aimed at strengthening local capacities in the countries affected. It must also provide for risk education programmes directed at children, who may not necessarily be aware of the threat posed by anti-personnel mines, unexploded ordnance or explosive remnants of war. This is a major issue because, according to the *Landmine Monitor 2023* report, half of the people killed or injured in 2022 were children. To cite that report again, children were a key target group for risk education in 2022, comprising 47 per cent of all beneficiaries during that year.

Mine clearance activities must likewise be accompanied by adequate victim support that takes gender inequalities and disabilities into account. The European Union fully supports gender mainstreaming in national strategies and international programmes for victim assistance.

In addition, the European Union calls for the role of women in efforts to tackle explosive remnants of war to be strengthened. Increasing women's involvement in mine clearance efforts, but also their participation in risk education programmes, makes it possible to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of such activities and to achieve better results in the long term.

The memorandum of understanding on establishing a joint task force to clear sea mines in the Black Sea ("Mine Counter-Measures Task Group Black Sea"), signed in Istanbul on 11 January, including by the Defence Ministers of two EU Member States, is an initiative of the utmost importance which is expected to contribute to the safety of navigation in the Black Sea.

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank you for having provided us with an opportunity to discuss this important topic. We hope that this Security Dialogue will make it possible to maintain a momentum of co-operation that is equal to the challenges of today and tomorrow. That is why, in closing, we call upon all States to join forces in combating the scourge of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices with a view to protecting our populations. The Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention scheduled to take place in Cambodia in November 2024 will be an opportunity to renew our collective commitment to anti-mine efforts and to take determined action.

Thank you.

The candidate countries North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Albania¹, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ and 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.

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