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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1000th MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

9 February 2022

**On small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition:
OSCE commitments and lessons learned**

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union and its Member States thank the speakers for their very interesting presentations on the important subject of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

The uncontrolled spread of SALW and of their ammunition is a major security and development issue, as is made clear by target 16.4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for arms flows to be significantly reduced by 2030. The spread of these weapons continues to fuel many conflicts, including conflicts in Europe, foster organized crime and encourage terrorism. It constitutes a major destabilizing factor. The security and safety of ammunition stockpiles is also an important issue in the fight against trafficking, as well as in preventing accidental explosions and protecting people.

In order to try to stem this scourge effectively and sustainably, the international community has joined forces within the framework of the United Nations, the OSCE and a number of other regional organizations. Assistance to countries whose security is affected by arms trafficking and who do not have the appropriate control tools must be a priority. It is through increased co-operation among all stakeholders and improved co-ordination of existing instruments that we can effectively combat the trafficking and diversion of conventional arms and their ammunition.

In adopting a strategy against illicit firearms, SALW and their ammunition on 19 November 2018, the European Union has acknowledged the importance of this issue. Furthermore, in order to reduce the risk of diversion of conventional arms and ammunition, the European Union established in January 2021¹ a common approach regarding end-user certificates. It has also recently adopted a new Action Plan on Firearms Trafficking (2020–2025), which covers both the internal and external dimensions of its work.

We fully support the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In that regard, we welcome the implementation report that the OSCE submitted to the Secretariat of the United Nations last year. The OSCE was thus the first regional organization to follow the recommendation of the Third Review Conference on

¹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/38 of 15 January 2021.

the Programme of Action, which heightened international attention on the usefulness and relevance of co-operation and assistance measures developed at the regional and subregional level. The European Union attaches great importance to the issue of preventing and combating diversion, which was the focus of the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects held in late July 2021.

The European Union also supports the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, to which all its Member States are party. One of the objectives of this Treaty is to prevent and combat the diversion of conventional arms, including SALW, to unauthorized end-users. Moreover, we welcome the work being carried out within the United Nations framework by the Group of Governmental Experts, which was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/55 to address the problems associated with the management of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

The European Union and its Member States are actively engaged in the fight against trafficking of SALW, also within the framework of the OSCE, by providing financial contributions. The European Union also supports various OSCE activities aimed at improving the control of SALW and their ammunition in Ukraine² and South-Eastern Europe³, for example. Lastly, since the start of 2020, the European Union has been playing a greater role in strengthening the co-ordination of efforts to combat illicit firearms trafficking in the Western Balkans by 2024. We welcome the significant contribution made by the OSCE, along with several international organizations and donors, in areas crucial to the effectiveness of States' policies (such as police dog capabilities, SALW deactivation, destruction of surpluses and stockpile management, public awareness-raising and support for weapons-collection activities).

The OSCE has enjoyed great success with regard to SALW. We therefore support the continuation of assistance projects, which are a flagship of the OSCE's operational effectiveness and visibility in the field. Many regions within the OSCE area are severely affected by the issue of SALW, and the circulation of SALW in the OSCE area poses a threat to the security of all of us. In addition, we support the efforts and commitment of many OSCE participating States to regularly review the relevance of the OSCE's normative frameworks, practical guides or assistance mechanism, in order to revise, develop or adapt them to the current circumstances. This is why dialogue and the exchange of good practices should continue, avoiding any politicization in implementation.

Small arms play a significant role in violence against women, including femicide. At the same time, women can effectively contribute to community awareness and education about the dangers associated with SALW. Therefore, and in line with Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/17, gender mainstreaming in SALW control is essential, also to ensure its effectiveness.

The destabilizing actions and conflicts that have emerged in the OSCE area remind us that it is imperative for all participating States to strictly and fully implement all OSCE instruments, including those on SALW and conventional ammunition.

We welcome this discussion with great interest. Indeed, the complementary views of the beneficiaries and contributors to these projects are crucial for us.

Thank you.

2 Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2009 of 02 December 2019.

3 Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2133 of 02 December 2021.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia⁴, Montenegro⁴, Serbia⁴ and Albania⁴, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

4 The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.