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**EU Statement on Countering Illicit Trafficking of SALW**

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Madame Chairperson, the illicit trafficking of firearms and small arms and light weapons (SALW) and conventional ammunition continue to contribute to instability and violence in the European Union, in its immediate neighbourhood, and in the rest of the world. Illicit weapons are fuelling global terrorism and conflicts and constitute serious impediments for peace, security, stability and development. This is why the European Union and its Member States attach great importance to enhancing peace and security in the OSCE area by reducing the threat posed by the illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of SALW and conventional ammunition.

We commend the Swedish FSC Chairmanship for scheduling two meetings to the topic of SALW/SCA. We thank the distinguished speakers for their insightful presentations, bringing to our attention efforts in countering illicit trafficking of firearms and SALW from the perspective of a country of destination. We also look forward to the Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA on 2-3 October, which will review OSCE commitments in this area, while taking into account important international developments, most notably the results of the Third Review Conference of the UN PoA.

Madame Chairperson, the EU and its MS remain committed to the full implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA, the OSCE Plan of Action on SALW and the UN Programme of Action which provides a valid and effective strategy to fight against the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons and a global forum to share and develop further actions at national, regional and international levels. The International Tracing Instrument (ITI) is one of the most important practical achievements of the PoA.

Since 2005 the EU's approach against illicit trafficking of SALW has been guided by the EU Strategy to Combat the Illicit Accumulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition as adopted by the European Council. This Strategy is being revised in order to take into account the developments since 2005. These include the increase in terrorist attacks in Europe, the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, the guiding principles of the 2016 EU Global Strategy, and actions within the EU with regard to the implementation of the 2015 European Agenda on Security, which identified illicit trafficking in firearms as one of the priorities under the overarching objective of disrupting the activities of terrorists and serious organised crime groups. The Agenda was followed by an EU Action Plan against illicit trafficking in and use of firearms and explosives and a revision of the EU's regulatory framework on the legal acquisition and possession of firearms, as well as by the Implementing Regulation on common minimum standards for deactivation of firearms. The aim of these measures is to make it more difficult to acquire firearms in the EU, better track legally held firearms, strengthen cooperation between Member States, and ensure that deactivated firearms are rendered permanently inoperable.

Moreover, the EU is facilitating cooperation between Member States' law enforcement agencies and their counterparts in its neighbourhood. The EU has set up a network of law enforcement personnel from Member States that focus on the fight against firearms trafficking by organised crime. This network, called "EMPACT Firearms", meets regularly to exchange information and experiences and develops activities in order to achieve pre-set goals. EMPACT-firearms is engaging in peer-to-peer activities and capacity building in the context of EU outreach to countries in its neighbourhood.

Madame Chairperson, we are grateful for the opportunity to exchange views on this important topic and we look forward to continuing our deliberations at the Biennial Meeting to Assess the Implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA next week.

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, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and

LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO 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.