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**STATEMENT BY
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 1076th MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

8 May 2024

On humanitarian mine action

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union and its Member States thank the speakers for their presentations on the key and particularly relevant topic of anti-personnel mines, booby traps and explosive remnants of war.

For over two years now, Russia has been waging, with the Belarusian Government's support, a brutal, illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine and against the European peace order. Russia is ignoring the norms and principles of international humanitarian law aimed at protecting civilian populations.

In this context, it is essential to recall the human losses and the tremendous security risks caused by the contamination of large areas by such explosive devices, which constitute a major threat to civilian populations and, in particular, to children. The European Union and its Member States stand and will continue to stand by Ukraine as it fights to defend its freedom, and they will also help Ukraine in clearing its territory of the hazards posed by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, including unexploded ordnance. The Ukrainian demining teams are to be commended on their remarkable work, which they have been carrying out even though the war is still raging.

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. We urge those States that have not yet done so to join the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (Ottawa Convention) without delay or to be guided, on an interim basis, by its provisions, which have saved countless lives since the Convention's entry into force almost 30 years ago.

The European Union also 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 sets out 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 this field.

The OSCE is already playing a front-rank role in humanitarian demining. It is helping its participating States to share the lessons learned from past efforts while at the same time facilitating the exchange of good practices among them. We appreciate its role in supporting mine action at various levels,

whether by strengthening participating States' standards and principles or by developing practical measures through assistance projects. The European Union is contributing 1.2 million euros towards the OSCE project in Ukraine that helps with the conduct of environmentally safe humanitarian demining operations in a systemic way, provides personnel with training opportunities and equipment, and shares expertise and international best practices.

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 likewise active in the various aspects of humanitarian demining: risk education, capacity-building (for example, through the provision of equipment and training), the deployment of on-site experts, medical care and clearance work. They are pooling their national expertise and supporting the activities of non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies on the ground. In addition, in February 2021, 2.6 million euros were earmarked for the implementation of the Oslo Action Plan with a view to promoting universalization of the Ottawa Convention and assisting States Parties to fulfil their obligations. The development of a successful humanitarian demining programme depends on the accuracy of the information and data collected on the contamination of a given area, in terms of both density of contamination and type of munition, with such particulars making it possible to tailor awareness-raising measures and clearance resources in the best possible way.

In collaboration with its Member States, the European Union is providing more than 110 million euros to support humanitarian demining in Ukraine. This includes ongoing support to the tune of over 50 million euros funded through the European Union's rapid response and humanitarian aid capabilities, including assistance with mine risk education, non-technical surveys, the acquisition of special demining equipment, and supporting the national capacities of Ukraine for demining and mine action governance.

Moreover, a new crisis response package worth 10 million euros is supporting the use of innovative technologies in mine action operations. Novel technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, applied to the detection and handling of explosive devices can serve as valuable tools for clearance work.

International co-operation must take humanitarian demining into consideration as an enabler of development, giving priority to community-based mine action and training activities intended to strengthen local capacities in the countries affected. It must also provide for risk education programmes directed at children, since according to the *Landmine Monitor 2023* report, half of the people killed or injured in 2022 were children.

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 achieve better results in the long run.

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 due to take place in Cambodia in November 2024 will serve as 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.