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**STATEMENT BY  
THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 969<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE  
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

24 February 2021

**On explosive hazards in Central Asia**

The European Union and its Member States thank the Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) for having organized this Security Dialogue on explosive hazards in Central Asia.

The problem of explosive hazards encompasses major humanitarian and security issues, which are acutely felt in Central Asia. The contamination of certain territories with landmines, especially anti-personnel mines, poses a particular threat to the civilian populations and is an impediment to human activity, as is the continued existence of explosive remnants of war. In addition, poor management of stockpiles of conventional ammunition can increase the risks of accidents. The diversion and uncontrolled spread of such ammunition can also fuel the proliferation and indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which today constitute a major cause of suffering on the part of the civilian population.

Faced with this vast array of challenges, the European Union and its Member States actively support the conventional disarmament instruments and the relevant multilateral processes.

All the Member States are Parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, which imposes obligations regarding the destruction of stockpiles and demining, and continue to call for its universalization.

We support Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (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 this area.

Protocol II (amended) to the CCW provides the framework of the work of a group of experts on IEDs, which has highlighted among other things the prevention of the diversion of IED components, the clearance of IEDs, the raising of awareness among civilian populations of the risks posed by IEDs, and assistance to victims.

Furthermore, we support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts established in 2020 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the basis of General Assembly resolution 72/55 to address security and safety issues arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

We welcome the active role assumed by the OSCE both in the prevention of explosive hazards and in combating their humanitarian and security-related consequences. The OSCE Handbook of Best Practices

on Conventional Ammunition (adopted by FSC Decision No. 6/08) thus regroups the best practices on the management of ammunition stockpiles, their physical security and their destruction. This Handbook also presents best practices on ammunition marking, registration and record-keeping and on the subject of ammunition transportation. This data is useful for combating the diversion of ammunition and, consequently, for combating IEDs.

The European Union has also supported the OSCE in its ambitious Integrated Co-operation on Explosive Hazards Programme in Central Asia. Within this framework, a regional explosive hazards training centre was inaugurated in 2019, with the support of several Member States, to contribute to capacity-building. We welcome in particular the experience acquired by Tajikistan and Kazakhstan in this area, which has enabled them to share their know-how throughout the region.

Lastly, we welcome the work of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre in collecting and analysing the questionnaires submitted annually by the participating States on anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war (updated by FSC Decision No. 7/04).

We hope that this Security Dialogue will give rise to fruitful exchanges and enable us to maintain a dynamic of co-operation commensurate with the challenges that remain in terms of demining, securing stockpiles of conventional ammunition and the fight against IEDs in particular.

Thank you.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, Serbia<sup>1</sup> and Albania<sup>1</sup>, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area Iceland, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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<sup>1</sup> The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.