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STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT THE 968th MEETING OF THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION

17 February 2021

On man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS)

The European Union and its Member States thank the Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation for having put this important topic on the agenda of today's meeting.

Man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) pose several challenges. These weapons are easy to transport, conceal and fire, which means that there is a very high risk of their being diverted and used by unauthorized end-users, including terrorist groups. MANPADS also call for special attention and consideration, given the great loss of human life and the potential effects on civil aviation that could result from the criminal or terrorist use of such systems.

Various initiatives have already been undertaken within international, multilateral and regional frameworks – such as the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the United Nations General Assembly, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the OSCE – to address the aforementioned challenges. These initiatives seek in particular to prevent and combat the risks of diversion and illicit transfer and unauthorized access to MANPADS by strengthening transport security, improving stockpile security and management, implementing national procedures for the control of transfers, developing information exchange mechanisms, and enhancing transparency with regard to exports and imports of such systems.

Particular attention has also been paid to the threat posed by these systems to civil aviation. For example, the European Union is fully funding a project on civil aviation security in Africa, Asia and the Middle East (CASE II), the overall objective of which is to counter the terrorist threat faced by civil aviation. This project, which is being implemented by the European Civil Aviation Conference, was launched in 2020 and is able to draw on a budget of 8 million euros.

At the OSCE, the participating States have recognized the threats that the unauthorized proliferation and use of MANPADS pose especially to civil aviation, peacekeeping, crisis management and anti-terrorist operations, and they have adopted tools and guidelines that have helped to prevent and mitigate this risk. They have committed themselves to promoting the application of effective and comprehensive export controls for MANPADS, as endorsed in Maastricht Ministerial Council Decision No. 8/03, and accordingly adopted the OSCE Principles for Export Controls of MANPADS (FSC.DEC/3/04 of 26 May 2004, revised by FSC.DEC/5/08 of 26 May 2008). They also adopted a set of best practices on stockpile management and security for MANPADS in 2006.

These efforts should be continued. We hope that the discussions today will help all the participating States to identify areas in which improvements can be made in that respect. Indeed, the issue of MANPADS

should be integrated into our current efforts to combat small arms and light weapons (SALW), proliferation and terrorism. Special attention could be given to the demilitarization of MANPADS and the destruction of stockpiles. MANPADS should likewise be integrated further into our technical assistance programmes on SALW and ammunition. Finally, other specific guidance documents on MANPADS management and security could also be considered and developed.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

The candidate countries the Republic of North Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, Serbia¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and San Marino, align themselves with this statement.

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