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EU Statement on SALW and SCA

The European Union (EU) warmly welcomes Mr. Ekrem Spahiu, Deputy Minister of Defence of Albania to the Forum for Security Co-operation. We take this opportunity to thank the Government of Albania and especially you, Deputy Minister, for significantly advancing the demilitarisation of surplus ammunition and armaments in your country, thus contributing to security at national and regional level.

We highly commend the effort of Albania's Government to dispose an impressive amount of surplus munitions, weapons, major armaments and equipments, as well as hazardous chemicals and materials, all of which will reduce risks to the population and prevent proliferation. These efforts have to be sustained as Albania's large quantities of obsolete weapons and ammunitions continue to pose, amongst others, a risk to its population. We will study with interest the areas for assistance mentioned in today's presentation.

The project we have learned about today highlights the specialised demilitarisation capabilities that have been developed in Albania, which are also in high demand throughout the OSCE region and elsewhere. As Albania continues its demilitarisation plan, we hope that countries facing similar problems might benefit from its experience and capacities.

The reduction of SALW in Albania has been ably supported by the OSCE and other international organisations and partners, including several EU Member States. We look forward to continued fruitful cooperation in the future.

We would also like to thank Lieutenant Colonel László Szatmári, FSC Coordinator for Projects on SALW and SCA, and Lieutenant Colonel Simon Macrory-Tinning, Chairperson of the Informal Group of Friends on SALW, for their views on how we could advance FSC's work and strengthen cooperation on SALW and SCA.

We reiterate that the EU remains committed to the implementation of the OSCE Plan of Action on SALW and attaches great importance to its strengthened and enhanced implementation through operationalisation of its provisions in a flexible and pragmatic way. Furthermore, we are convinced that there is a compelling need for an enhanced multilateral approach on SALW. In order to develop synergy, coherence and complementarity between the OSCE and the UN normative framework on SALW, the EU supports the need for the FSC to consider follow up measures to the Second Review Conference of the UN Programme for Action on SALW, as well as to the Arms Trade Treaty.

The IGoF on SALW should play an instrumental role in providing impetus behind efforts to keep OSCE normative basis in step with other relevant international commitments and in maintaining the OSCE's status as the leading regional organisation in this field. Additionally, continued analytical reporting and review of the implementation of OSCE projects in the SALW and SCA area is needed in order to optimise their impact.

As with other security and conflict issues, we see a need to embed gender aspects into our SALW work. As part of the implementation of the OSCE Plan of Action the EU and its Member States support the elaboration of measures that strengthen the participation of women in the development of policies and the performance of activities that combat illicit SALW, including at decision-making levels.

The OSCE adds significant value on SALW, especially in regard to raising awareness, implementation and assisting participating States in the development of relevant legislation. We recognise the ongoing challenges and therefore encourage all participating States to continually review the relevant OSCE commitments and actively implement them in order to prevent the illicit proliferation of SALW, thereby minimising their devastating impact.

At the same time, the FSC should look at the future and examine ways to strengthen our ability to tackle the harmful threat of illicit SALW, including assisting the ATT's entry into force and implementation. We would welcome forward looking decisions on SALW that add focus and direction for the years to come. Discussion on SALW within the Helsinki+40 process would be welcomed, especially in the broader context of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, as well as of emerging transnational threats.

Finally, the EU would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for bringing this issue to the FSC. We would also like to thank again the Deputy Minister of Defence of Albania for his presentation.

The acceding country CROATIA^{*}, the candidate countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, MONTENEGRO, ICELAND^{**} and SERBIA, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, the European Free Trade Association countries LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

^{*} Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

^{**} Iceland continues to be a member of EFTA and the European Economic Area.