

**Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna**

ENGLISH only

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Chairmanship: Ukraine

**Statement by
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for European Integration**

*946th Meeting of the Forum for Security Co-operation,
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Security Dialogue on SALW and SCA / Mine Action

**Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am delighted to join the forum this morning - making the best use of modern technologies - and offer my views on a number of security issues that genuinely require collective response of the OSCE.

Illicit SALW and their ammunition continue to contribute to instability and armed violence, derailing sustainable development and crisis management efforts, further destabilizing the OSCE region, fuelling organized crime and terrorist attacks.

Addressing the enormous destructive and destabilising power of illicit trafficking across national borders of SALW and conventional ammunition, is of utmost importance to maintain regional security and stability. Remaining unresolved, they continue to exacerbate the humanitarian situation and further incite violence in the conflict-affected areas.

This Organisation has a big role to play with its unique set of tools to address multifaceted challenges to global and regional stability emanating from the illicit spread, excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA).

Broad and continuous application of our political-military instruments dealing with arms control and disarmament is of essence to this end.

The OSCE participating States, having necessary political will, could step up efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate this dangerous phenomenon. To reach this goal, **a vital role is played by the full and bona fide implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA, respective OSCE Ministerial Councils' decisions and UN legally binding agreements and treaties.**

The OSCE normative framework is strong, when fully implemented, but it needs further development and improvement to meet challenges arising from the technological progress.

This work has been launched following the OSCE Ministerial Council's decision of 2017, starting with the update of OSCE Best Practice Guides. In recent couple of years 2018-2020, the OSCE participating States made concrete steps forward in reviewing these documents through the biennial meeting and informal group of friends.

This is only a beginning. **This work should continue with the view to modernize the core OSCE documents on SALW and SCA.** The OSCE can be also a useful forum to explore initiatives on enhancing the instruments of combating illicit trafficking of SALW and conventional ammunition through maritime transport and inland waters.

The OSCE, through its field missions and offices, implements a range of practical assistance projects in the field of SALW and SCA in many participating States. This is an effective tool to enhance the participating States' capabilities in combating illicit trafficking, excessive and destabilising accumulation of SALW and conventional ammunition.

Having said that, **I would like to further address two particular issues:**

First, the importance of the full **state border control** by the Government of Ukraine to prevent illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition;

Secondly, humanitarian demining activities in Ukraine and in the controlled territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions in particular.

Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gent. excellences

Countering illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a top priority given formidable security challenge we face nowadays defending Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukraine is being committed to continue implementing standing OSCE and international documents in the field of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. In particular, the production, possession and destruction of small arms and light weapons in my country are licensed and supervised in accordance with a number of national regulations.

We attach particular importance to ensuring effective export control procedures that meet all international requirements. In this sphere Ukraine strictly adheres to decisions taken by the OSCE, UN Security Council and international export control regimes.

Ukraine has been facing large scale illicit trafficking of SALW and conventional ammunition through the segment of its border located within the temporarily occupied areas of the Donbas region of Ukraine.

The Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE regularly reports on clandestine night-time convoys entering and exiting Ukraine through points deviating border crossing facilities. More weapons and military equipment, including SALW and conventional ammunition, find its way to Ukraine through the above-mentioned parts of the border under the guise of humanitarian assistance or by other diverse routes. All of the mentioned **convoys and cargos enter and exit the territory of sovereign Ukraine in full violation of its territorial integrity and sovereignty.**

Such actions contradict the letter and the spirit of the OSCE norms and principles in the field of SALW and SCA and undermine further global and regional efforts in this domain. These actions erode the internationally established export control and licensing procedures securing effective customs and border controls.

The only viable way to halt this downward trend is **to restore full control by the Government of Ukraine over the entire stretch of our country's internationally recognised borders in Eastern Ukraine.**

Further **progress in this direction would substantially strengthen the security of the whole OSCE region** and terminate further destabilising transfers of weapons and ammunition.

Distinguished colleagues,

Touching on the issue regarding Mine Action, I would like to underscore its relevance for the OSCE region. One of the biggest challenges that still affects the region is the issue of landmines.

This indiscriminate means of war continues to kill people and tear societies apart years after a conflict has ended. They continue to instil terror, stop people from returning to their normal lives and refugees to their own homes. The global number of land mine victims has substantially increased during the past six years. We believe that implementing the Ottawa Convention is fundamental for peace, stabilisation and economic recovery. It is our responsibility to preserve and strengthen it and ensure its universalisation.

The OSCE contribution in cooperation with the governmental and non-governmental organisations in the field of mine action is important and has great potential for further enlargement. Such synergy may substantially contribute to the efforts in combating this dangerous threat in the region.

The issue of mine action is of crucial importance for my country. Nowadays **Ukraine is one of the countries most contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war as a result of the ongoing Russian aggression.**

The main causes of civilian casualties include mines, unexploded shells, booby-traps and improvised explosive devices. These resulted in about one-third of the total number of civilian deaths and injuries.

Ukraine, in terms, fully complies with international obligations and its Armed Forces - operating in the East - adhere to the provisions of Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices and Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, annexed to the Convention on Prohibitions or restricting the use of specific types of conventional weapons that are considered to be excessively harmful or non-selective.

All engineer munitions are utilized exclusively in a controlled manner. Pursuant to the provisions of Protocol II, all governmental authorities, security or military personnel etc. while planting mines, minefields or mine obstacles are obliged to record and retain all respective maps, diagrams or other records of contaminated areas.

Minefield marking is carried out in accordance with national regulations that comply with Protocol II, international regulations and national standards.

Ukraine promotes the ban of anti-personnel mines and actively contributes to international efforts on the destruction of landmine stockpiles. Thus, we support international endeavours to fully implement the Ottawa Convention. In accordance with its obligations under Article 4 of the Ottawa Convention, Ukraine has destroyed more than 3 million anti-personnel landmines and continues with an ambitious project on the disposal of PFM-1 and PFM-1C landmines.

According to preliminary estimates, about 7,000 square kilometres in the government-controlled areas and approximately 14,000 square kilometres of the temporary occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, are contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war.

8 documented cases of the use of anti-personnel mines against Ukrainian troops in the Joint Forces Operation area have been reported since the beginning of 2020. Here I would like to underline that Ukraine is committed to its obligations under the Ottawa Convention. **Our Armed Forces do not use these types of mines** and carry out activities on destruction of the remaining stocks under very strict national and international control.

Moreover, in 2020 the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission documented two cases of use of anti-personnel landmines by the occupation administration of the Russian Federation.

These facts reveal violations of Articles 3 and 8 of the Protocol II. It needs to be noted **that the Russian Federation acceded to the Protocol in March 2005, thus – this country once again displays full disregard for its international obligations.**

29 demining groups from the Armed Forces of Ukraine as well as 16 pyrotechnic teams of the State Emergency Service, carry out demining tasks across the liberated territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. As of today, governmental demining teams have cleared more than 35 500 hectares of land. They have cleared more than 2000 km of roads, 1000 km of railways; detected and destroyed more than 460 000 explosive objects and remnants of war.

In order to organize management, control and coordination of all demining activities, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence annually develops Action Plan for humanitarian demining activities in the controlled territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Since 2016, international non-governmental organizations, incl. HALO Trust, Danish Mine Action Group (DDG), and Swiss Mine Action Fund (FSD), have been assisting the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine in demining of our territories and we are thankful for that.

Ukraine is also grateful to the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine for considerable support and assistance in various spheres, especially in mine action.

I cannot but mention here the great support provided by our good friends from the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom for the mine action project.

For reference. Terms of realization: extended until 31.10.2020. Total project budget: 2,168,620 euros.

I would also like to commend the OSCE activities in Ukraine in this domain. All these contributed to the enhancement of national humanitarian mine action capacity, inter alia, by harmonising Ukrainian regulations with International Mines Action Standards (IMAS). We are also thankful to all donors who made their kind contributions.

Dear colleagues,

To control the quality of demining, the Demining Centre of the Armed Forces of Ukraine has been designated as the Certification Body for Demining Operators in the area of “Humanitarian Demining including: Non-Technical Inspection, Technical Inspection, Cleaning of Combat Areas, Manual Demining”.

The Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, in addition, does not stay away from such an important component of mine action as **the assistance to mine victims and explosive remnants of war.**

In this regard, the Government established 11 additional in-patient stabilization units in regional medical facilities and 4 military field hospitals to provide assistance both for service personnel and civilians in the Joint Forces Operation area.

Moreover, 3 additional mobile medical teams were established in the area of Joint Forces operation last year to provide qualified medical assistance to the civilian population.

Reduction in the number of individuals affected by landmines and explosive remnants of war largely depends on quality and effectiveness of a specialized public information campaign on all risks associated with landmines and explosive remnants of war.

In order to raise public awareness on the areas contaminated with landmines and explosives, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, with the assistance of Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine, has **developed the Interactive map which is accessible through the MoD webpage.**

This brings me to my closing remarks.

And would like to reiterate once again that despite difficult epidemiological situation in Ukraine and ongoing hybrid aggression, my country remains committed to its international obligations in the field of small arms and light weapons, stockpiles of conventional ammunition and mine action.

We all have to painfully recognize that literally - as we speak - our defence forces continue to sustain combat casualties in Eastern Ukraine, civilian population suffers, and the local economy shrinks with real dangers to the environment. All this is being the reality in the Donbas caused by the illegal exploitation of SALW, SCA and the variety of explosive objects. This horrible situation cannot last indefinitely, and it requires an effective and collective response.

And the only way to halt the destructive and destabilising power of illicit trafficking across national borders of SALW and conventional ammunition is **to restore full control by the Government over the entire stretch of our country's internationally recognised borders in Eastern Ukraine.**

Thank you for your attention!