

Spanish Presidency of the European Union

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EU Statement in response to Mr. Dorijan Maršič, Director of International Trust Fund (ITF)

The European Union warmly welcomes Mr. Dorijan Maršič, Director of International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) and thanks him for his thorough presentation on Demining and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Projects in practice as part of post-conflict rehabilitation.

The destabilising consequences of the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of SALW and ammunition and the threat that they pose to international peace and security have been long recognised by the EU.

The 2005 EU SALW Strategy provides an overall framework for the EU's action in this field. Through this strategic document, the EU has developed an integrated approach to combat the destabilizing effects of illicit trade and excessive accumulation of SALW on international peace, security and development. Within this framework, the EU has been providing support to third countries and regions, helping them to increase the security of stockpile, destroy SALW and ammunition surpluses, increase capacities of law

enforcement agencies, raise awareness, and develop adequate SALW legislation, regulation and administrative procedures.

Likewise, anti-personnel landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) continue to inflict death and injury; they hinder reconciliation, stabilization and economic recovery and place a heavy burden on poor countries around the world. They also have a great impact in post-conflict societies impeding the return of refugees and internally displaced people. Mine Action plays an important role in early recovery and in supporting transition from conflicts to broader development efforts.

Since the early 1990s the international community has undertaken firm commitments and made considerable efforts to reduce the impact of antipersonnel landmines in affected countries and on their populations. From the outset, the European Union has supported the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The EU has been promoting adherence to the Convention through a series of regional workshops and technical assistance visits. The EU has also provided cooperation and assistance to states parties, through demining activities, stockpile destruction, mine risk education, and mine victims assistance programmes. The EU's assistance, together with aid provided by the EU Member States bilaterally, makes the European Union the largest donor in the fight against mines and ERW. Member States and the European Commission's contributions amount to over 1,5 billion Euros over the last ten years.

The EU welcomes the outcome of the Second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention, in particular its focus on Victim

Assistance. It supports the 2009 Cartagena Declaration “A shared Commitment for a Mine Free World” and the Cartagena Action Plan 2010 – 2014, that will guide our work for the next five years. The EU is already working on how to continue to support and implement this Action Plan in a coherent and effective manner.

The OSCE has also developed a significant experience in these areas. In Tajikistan in particular the OSCE has recently finished a successful Comprehensive Programme on SALW and Conventional Ammunition as well as a Programme on Mine Action that includes mapping and clearing the affected territories, enabling safe patrolling of the border. We are following with interest the possibility of establishing a Central Asian Mine Coordination Council.

But much remains to be achieved in the OSCE area. In this regard, the EU encourages OSCE participating States to continue funding these activities through extra – budgetary contributions. We also appeal to countries which have not yet acceded to the Ottawa Convention, to do so as soon as possible, and to apply and respect the principles of the Convention, in order to join in the efforts to permanently eliminate antipersonnel landmines.

The EU follows with interest the work carried out by ITF in the implementation of its Mine Action activities, in South East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as its regional approach to build confidence and facilitate cooperation among mine/ERW contaminated countries. We welcome collaboration between OSCE and ITF to develop a regional cooperation and coordination mechanism in Central Asia, based on the extensive experience gained in the field of mine action in the last eleven years. The EU wishes Mr Maršič and his organization the best success in their endeavours.

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

*Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.