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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
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RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY
SECURITY AND ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 1024th PLENARY MEETING OF
THE OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO OPERATION**

5 October 2022

**Agenda item: Security Dialogue
Subject: Explosive hazards – “The iron harvest”**

Mr. Chairperson,

We welcome the decision of the Belgian Chairmanship to organize the plenary meeting in accordance with the Forum’s politico-military mandate – humanitarian demining issues. At the same time, we cannot but express our disappointment at the Chairmanship’s approach to today’s discussion. The concept note circulated ahead of the meeting focuses on “Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine”. We would have thought it more appropriate to return to neutral moderating, as we have repeatedly called for. It is puzzling that, despite our previous comments, you have once again invited a biased Ukrainian panellist to the Forum. This openly violates the principle of impartiality. If the Chairmanship is positioning such events as an “exchange of views”, it should at least have tried to ensure the participation of representatives of Donbas and Russian specialists involved in demining the liberated territories of Ukraine.

We trust that the opinion of the Russian delegation will be taken into account when the agenda of the Forum’s meetings is drawn up. It is for this very purpose, after all, that the Chairperson seeks the agreement of all delegations when setting the work programme.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our country has historically attached great importance to humanitarian demining. After the Great Patriotic War, the mine clearance from the territory of the USSR and later the Russian Federation went on for many decades and continues to this day. However, despite the extensive work carried out to demine and clear our cities and territories of explosive hazards, the consequences of the inhumane war unleashed against us by Nazi Germany and its allies are still to be found on Russian soil. To this day, residents of Volgograd, St. Petersburg and Veliky Novgorod find unexploded mines and munitions within the municipal infrastructure and in the environs of their cities.

The Russian Federation is doing its utmost to create a world free of mines and other explosive hazards. The results of this work at the national level are reflected annually in our reports under the

Inhumane Weapons Convention and its additional Protocol II and in the responses by the Russian Federation to the OSCE Questionnaire on Anti-Personnel Mines and Explosive Remnants of War.

We pay particular attention to assisting other States. Our specialists carry out humanitarian demining operations; we send in teams of military engineers and explosives experts and provide the necessary equipment. Mine clearance in Syria remains one of our priorities.

We recall that in 1999, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, NATO, led by the United States of America, committed barbaric aggression against Yugoslavia. Prohibited cluster munitions were widely used in that operation. Most of the air strikes were carried out on the territory of what is now the Republic of Serbia: the peaceful cities of Priština, Prizren, Belgrade, Uroševac, Đakovica, Kraljevo, Užice, Novi Sad and others.

In 2008 the Governments of the Russian Federation and Serbia reached an agreement on solving the large-scale problem of clearing Serbian territory of unexploded ordnance with the aid of specialists from the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations. An operation to clear cluster munitions and unexploded bombs from the territory of Niš International Airport and an army depot near the town of Paraćin was carried out by Russian bomb disposal technicians.

Russian specialists provided guidance to the Mine Action Centre of the Republic of Serbia, demonstrating in practice advanced methods (including combined clearance and mechanical clearance) of working with modern search equipment in strict accordance with the International Mine Action Standards recognized by the United Nations. In ten years of joint work, the Russian-Serbian humanitarian demining team cleared unexploded ordnance from over 672 hectares of land. A total of 13,276 items of unexploded ordnance, including aerial bombs, shells and cluster munitions, have been located and destroyed.

The Russian Federation is assisting in the demining of the territory of South Ossetia. The work was carried out in four phases between 2016 and 2019, during which teams of Russian demining experts surveyed about 135 hectares of South Ossetian territory. A total of 1,049 explosive hazards, including anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, tripwires, along with caches of small arms and ammunition, were located.

Demining is also an integral part of the Russian peacekeeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has been made possible thanks to the agreements of the leaders of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia of 9 November 2020 on a complete ceasefire and termination of all hostilities. The Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations has surveyed more than 728 hectares in Nagorno-Karabakh and located and neutralized 17,659 explosive hazards. This work forms the basis for the establishment of a peaceful life.

Mr. Chairperson,

A lot has been said today about the issue of tackling the mine threat on the territory of Ukraine. We see that the Ukrainian representatives and the delegations supporting that country are once again trying to present the criminal regime in Kyiv as an “innocent and honourable victim”, shifting responsibility for the suffering of the civilian population on to our military. As always, we would be only too willing to provide our esteemed colleagues with a mirror.

First of all, over the past few months, the Ukrainian army has been deliberately using PFM-1 Lepestok miniature anti-personnel mines prohibited by the Ottawa Convention of 1997 against civilians. One such mine contains only 37 grams of explosives, but this is enough at least to tear off an adult’s leg. There have been 74 recorded cases of civilians being blown up by Lepestok mines in the Donetsk People’s

Republic alone. By using these dangerous munitions, the Ukrainian Government is violating the Ottawa Convention, which it itself signed. Ukraine's use on a massive scale of Lепestok mines against the civilian population shows that the Ukrainian armed forces are not a civilized European army but terrorist units.

Secondly, the Ukrainian side has started using German DM1399 mines in the Donetsk area. What is more, these mines were laid remotely. The munitions descend by means of stabilizing parachutes and are then automatically activated. It is practically impossible to deactivate them afterwards. Demining experts are unable to get close to them, since this type of weapon has a self-destruct system with high-explosive effect. These are anti-tank mines, but the sensitive fuse can also be triggered by civilian vehicles and even human beings. It is outrageous that the Ukrainian armed forces used these munitions against a peaceful dacha community on the outskirts of Donetsk. This is just one of the recent cases.

Thirdly, in August this year, it became known that the Ukrainian armed forces had received French-made MI AC HPD F2 anti-tank mines. Fifty of these mines were laid on the outskirts of the village of Opytne near Donetsk. Our colleagues can see on the screen a photograph of the munition, more specifically its underside with the characteristic elements and markings. HPD F2 mines cannot be defused or retrieved. The use of such weapons is in direct violation of Protocol II of the 1980 Geneva Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. The mine reacts to the magnetic field of an object and does not distinguish between different types of equipment. As a consequence, it poses a danger not only to combat vehicles, but also to civilian means of transport and special equipment. The target sensor also responds to signals from a simple metal detector, which means it is also dangerous for people carrying out demining work.

Fourthly, there are reports that the Ukrainian armed forces are mining the approach roads to the city of Soledar with German DM31 mines. This mine is similar to the French-made one mentioned earlier. These devices are also equipped with a magnetic sensor and do not detonate as a result of direct contact but when a metal surface approaches the mine. In other words, you just have to stand nearby wearing a bulletproof vest or use a metal detector to make it explode. Russian deminers say that they literally have to take off all their protective armour when they are clearing these mines.

In short, the Western handlers are also actively involved in "polluting" Ukraine with mines. The European Union countries, which today advocated compliance with international humanitarian law and fervently tried to convince us of their commitment to the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions, have in fact been supplying mines to Ukraine since 2014 and thus undermining international humanitarian demining efforts, which, incidentally, they themselves finance. Such is the vicious circle: on the one hand they provide treatment and on the other they literally cripple.

Today, the EU colleagues have once again shown that they have no scruples when it comes to their methods and means, while the Ukrainian Government pays no attention to the international treaties and agreements to which it is a party. As a result, inordinate numbers of anti-personnel mines have been planted in some towns and cities, and non-targeted anti-tank munitions are appearing near others. Meanwhile, the so-called "democratic countries" are turning a blind eye or ascribing Ukrainian crimes to Russia.

It is clear to the Russian delegation that in the current situation it is pointless to appeal to reason and demand that Ukraine and its "armourers" comply with international conventions on countering the threat posed by mines. For that reason, our army is concentrating its efforts on locating and disarming mines that have already been laid, and on identifying and destroying depots containing such weapons.

Our country is also doing all it can to ensure that the new Russian territories will be able to enjoy a safe and peaceful existence as soon as possible. Mine clearance detachments of the Russian armed forces continue without interruption to clear residential areas and the environs of towns and cities of mines and explosive hazards. The aim of demilitarizing Ukraine will be accomplished.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.