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**STATEMENT BY MR. KONSTANTIN GAVRILOV,
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS ON MILITARY SECURITY AND
ARMS CONTROL, AT THE 991st PLENARY MEETING OF THE
OSCE FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION**

27 October 2021

Agenda item: Security Dialogue

Subject: Ongoing initiatives in the field of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition

Mr. Chairperson,

We are grateful to the Austrian Chairmanship for having organized this plenary meeting on the wide range of OSCE activities in the field of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA). This is an important and relevant topic.

Nevertheless, as today's discussion has shown, there is an increasing tendency for our negotiating platform to discuss various politico-military issues from a gender perspective. Today, it is kind of difficult to detect any discussion about actually countering illicit trafficking in SALW. One gets the impression that we are not talking about SALW at all, but solely about women's rights. Does it not seem to those present in this room that the participating States are in this way displaying political short-sightedness and working towards blatant affirmative action? In the context of today's topic, I should like to stress that the security of the OSCE area requires specific efforts to counter illicit arms trafficking, with specialists and professionals in their field responsible for these efforts, not representatives of one sex or the other. We will continue to work from that assumption in the future.

For our part, as a follow-up to the discussion begun at the OSCE Meeting to Review the Implementation of OSCE Assistance Projects in the Field of SALW and SCA, we should like to share our thoughts on the ongoing work of our Organization in countering illicit arms trafficking.

Above all, it should be noted that the OSCE's practical activities make a concrete contribution to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects. It is to date the only global instrument in the field of combating illicit trafficking in SALW. The OSCE's support for the implementation of the Programme of Action is very important, not least from the point of view of bolstering the Programme's authority. The potential of the Programme is by no means exhausted at present. There is still much work to be done, above all at the national and regional levels. In this context, I should like to mention that our country has always welcomed

efforts to achieve closer alignment of the Programme with the relevant OSCE regulatory instruments aimed at combating illicit trafficking in SALW.

We are convinced that responsibility for controlling the circulation of SALW should rest with the governments of the countries on whose territory these weapons are located. It is also the sovereign prerogative of participating States to determine the optimum standards for securing, marking and storing such weapons, and to choose the methods and technologies for the destruction of surplus SALW. With that in mind, the OSCE Best Practice Guides can serve as a useful reference point for national policymaking in this area.

Countering illicit trafficking in SALW has traditionally been a priority for the Russian Federation. Our country has strict regulations governing the circulation of SALW and ammunition. They fully meet the requirements of international instruments, including the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA. We are pursuing a responsible policy in the field of military-technical co-operation with other States. We submit information annually to the OSCE Secretariat on our exports of SALW to OSCE States and the corresponding imports, and also data on SALW within our national borders withdrawn from illegal circulation and destroyed.

On a positive note, we may point out that the thrust of today's discussion is in line with the 2018 Milan Ministerial Council Declaration, given the role of project activities in establishing norms and best practices in the field of SALW and SCA. We welcome Austria's initiative designed to strengthen the OSCE assistance mechanism, and likewise welcome continuing the process of updating the Best Practice Guides, which are made use of when implementing projects.

Our country attaches great importance to international co-operation in the disposal of surpluses and obsolete types of SALW and ammunition. Since 2004, Russian military experts, working together with foreign specialists, have been successfully implementing projects in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. We are ready, upon request, to consider providing expert assistance on all aspects of SALW control throughout the life cycle of such weapons, and also to share our experience in establishing an effective regulatory and legal framework in this area.

Mr. Chairperson,

A lot has been said today about the situation with regard to tackling the mine threat in south-eastern Ukraine. We regret that the Ukrainian delegation has once again diverted the discussion to unsubstantiated accusations against Russia, inflaming the debate with confrontational rhetoric. In exercise of the right to reply, I should like to note the following.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, south-eastern Ukraine is the most mine-infested territory in the world. Since the beginning of the armed confrontation, over 1,000 people have been killed in Donbas as a result of exploding mines. Additionally, around 2 million people are potentially at risk from mine-related hazards. Children are those who suffer the most.

I should like to stress the importance of the efforts by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) to raise the awareness of the local population in Donbas with regard to the risk posed by mines. The Mission's thematic report of 19 October is telling in that respect. The Mission reported the deployment by the Ukrainian military of an MON-90 anti-personnel fragmentation mine close to a checkpoint near the Ukrainian-Government-controlled settlement of Popasna. It should be recalled that the use of such mines contravenes Ukraine's international obligations under the 1997 Ottawa Convention.

The SMM also reported that in response to its request for the removal of the mine from a road regularly used by the monitors, the Ukrainian members of the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination submitted an official notice on 16 October indicating that the mine had been removed. A few days later, however, the monitors noted that the mine was still present.

This egregious case of inconsistency between what Ukraine's representatives say and what actually happens on the ground is a striking example of how they regularly mislead the international community and undermine the efforts of international humanitarian organizations to clear mines in Donbas.

I should add that this is not a one-off case. The aforementioned fact revealed by the SMM merely serves as a vivid illustration of how we should treat anything coming from the lips of the Ukrainian Government.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.