



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF UKRAINE
AT THE 1033rd FSC PLENARY MEETING
(25 January 2023)**

Agenda item 1, Security Dialogue:

“SALW/SCA in South-East Europe: Achieving Security through Cooperation”

Mr Chairperson,

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement by the European Union. In addition, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

Let me express our gratitude to all our today`s keynote speakers for their valuable contributions to our discussion on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (SCA).

We appreciate this opportunity to hear about international experience in the field of SALW and SCA. Bosnia and Herzegovina knows firsthand how much suffering and destruction a war can cause as well as how hard it is to overcome the terrible consequences of hostilities and bitter war legacy, in particular those related to the illegal diversion of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

As the concept note to our today`s meeting states, the Russian war against Ukraine challenged the European security architecture, in particular commonly agreed principles and commitments under the OSCE documents on SALW and SCA.

Since the very beginning of its aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the Russian Federation persistently saturated temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine with illegal weapons cultivating organised criminal groups loyal to the occupational authorities and arming its local paramilitary groups.

These actions clearly aimed at preparing these territories for the future Russian large-scale invasion of Ukraine and at undermining internal stability in Ukraine and other countries of the region. The invasion launched on 24 February 2022 and the role of Ukrainian territories, temporarily occupied by Russia, in that invasion clearly proved that.

The large-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the temporary occupation of part of the territory of our state has become a factor in large-scale violations regarding the illegal distribution of SALW and SCA, which also leads to violations of international humanitarian law.

Fully ignoring its own obligations and undermining international efforts aimed at fighting against the illegal trafficking of SALW and SCA, the Russian Federation has turned this issue into one more instrument of its aggressive policy.

Ironically, while using the SALW/SCA issues as an instrument of war propaganda aimed at undermining defence cooperation of Ukraine with its international partners, the Russian Federation itself is far from being perfect and it is recognised by its own authorities.

For example, in November 2022, the Russian ministry of interior reported that the number of crimes related to arms and ammunition has increased by 30%. We have little doubt that the situation will even worsen when people, engaged in the war against Ukraine, return home having gained combat experience and sneaking weapons into civilian life. It is especially disturbing to imagine that many of them are ex-convicts with criminal records, who are now part of the Wagner mercenary group.

Mr Chairperson,

The OSCE remains the largest regional security organisation that provides its participating States with a platform to address current security challenges and threats, in particular those related to illegal trade, illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of SALW and SCA. Today, we have all witnessed how important this activity is for participating States.

In these challenging times, the OSCE assistance mechanism proves indispensable to promote the effective implementation of commitments related to SALW/SCA. We commend the OSCE activities in Ukraine in this domain, notably the realisation of three assistant projects aimed at strengthening the capacities of Ukrainian authorities (Ministry of Interior, State Customs Service, State Border Service) in preventing and combating illicit trafficking of weapons, ammunition and explosives in all its aspects. Let me also use this opportunity to express our gratitude to all stakeholders and donors of the relevant projects.

Despite the fact that the Russian Federation has blocked the extension of the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine mandate, we are looking forward to the continuation of respective extrabudgetary projects under the auspices of the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office - Project Coordinator in Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.