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United States Mission to the OSCE

Forum for Security Cooperation

Agenda Item 1

Security Dialogue on Explosive Remnants of War

As delivered by Deputy Arms Control Delegate Spencer Fields
October 5, 2022

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Good Morning Excellencies and Colleagues,

The United States thanks the Belgian Chair for raising this timely and important issue for discussion. Anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war, or ERW, have a lasting and harmful impact on communities that have been or are currently affected by armed conflict. As a result of ERW, fertile fields lie fallow, survivors must cope with physical scars or debilitation, and communities must cope with lost homes or loved ones.

Mindful of the need to make these communities whole again, the United States is the largest single donor to demining and ERW clearance in the OSCE region. Since 1993, the United States has provided \$508 million for conventional weapons destruction initiatives throughout the OSCE region to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance in post-conflict regions, which is an essential step in improving civilian security, promoting increased economic activity, and helping communities and countries return to a normal, peaceful life.

U.S. efforts include training and support for mine and ERW clearance operations, risk education, survivors' assistance, research and development, training and support for physical security and stockpile management of explosive ordnance. The United States is also a leader in the development and sharing of mine clearance technology, techniques, and information.

The United States has excellent bilateral cooperation on this issue with several of our partners here, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; we are providing assistance to areas impacted by the fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in the South Caucasus; and of course we are helping Ukraine as it faces the monumental and complex responsibility of protecting itself from the hazards of explosive remnants from Russia's ongoing war of aggression. Our intended funding toward ERW

clearance in 2022 in the OSCE region is more than \$102 million, which includes more than \$90 million alone to address the consequences of Russia's illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine.

Our work in Ukraine is, unfortunately, not new. In the aftermath of Russia's initial 2014 invasion, the United States spent nearly \$24 million to address ERW contamination in the Donbas in an effort to save lives and help people return to a normal life. Sadly, Putin's unprovoked and unjustified full-scale invasion that began on February 24 has already undone all earlier progress and has exposed millions more Ukrainian civilians to the threat of ERW. We can already surmise that the cleanup from Russia's attacks will take years to complete even with the most well-funded and coordinated response. The United States is dedicated to supporting efforts to help the people of Ukraine rebuild their lives safe from the threat of Russia's munitions and has committed to provide more than \$90 million to this end in the coming year. We recognize the Project Coordinator in Ukraine's tremendous contributions helping develop Ukraine's mine action authorities and improving its information management capacity. The United States is proud to have supported these important efforts that helped position the Government of Ukraine to face the significantly increased landmine and ERW threat caused by Russia's full-scale invasion.

Our extensive experience has taught us that effective mine and ERW clearance requires first and foremost that the affected states take national ownership of these efforts. In addition, success will depend upon building and sustaining strong partnerships between mine-affected states and those entities with the resources and expertise to help mitigate the threat of landmines.

In this regard, we commend the Tajikistan National Mine Action Center (TNMAC)'s leadership, who we have heard from today. The Center manages its own operational teams and coordinates the work of international operators to support Tajikistan's mine and ERW clearance goals. The United States is proud to partner with Tajikistan to support these efforts with continued national capacity development assistance focused on strategic planning, training, project development, quality-assurance, and program management. In U.S. Fiscal Year 2021, U.S. implementing partners in Tajikistan destroyed 13,395 anti-personnel landmines, 1,739 anti-tank landmines, and 3,729 pieces of unexploded ordnance.

Mr. Chair,

The OSCE is already a leader in helping to share among its participating States the lessons learned from past efforts, just as it facilitates the sharing of best practices among them. The United States is proud to have supported the OSCE program on Integrated Cooperation on Explosive Hazards (Phase III) and its successful provision of regional Explosive Ordnance Disposal courses in Tajikistan in 2021.

Mine and ERW clearance worldwide is guided by the *International Mine Action Standards* and its accompanying *Technical Notes on Mine Action*. The OSCE's ability to convene and facilitate regional training opportunities, rooted in these standards, and bringing together states in the OSCE region facing similar explosive hazards is the OSCE's best tool for promoting good practices. These efforts also can contribute to confidence building and security when there is strong cross-regional participation.

The United States again thanks the Chair and our guests from Bosnia-Herzegovina, France, and Tajikistan today for their insightful and timely presentations.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.