



European Union

**EU Statement at the
Working Group on Firearms**

**UN Convention against Transnational Organised crime (UNTOC)
United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**

Vienna, 4-5 May 2022

Distinguished Chair,

Dear colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland†, Norway†, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

Mr Chair, this is a meeting of the Working Group on Firearms and unfortunately, we are witnessing an armed conflict taking place within driving distance from Vienna. Therefore, at the outset, let me express the EU and its Member States' full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The EU condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, which grossly violates international law and the UN Charter, and undermines international security and stability. The EU demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognised borders and abide by the UN General Assembly resolution entitled "Aggression against Ukraine" supported by 141 states at the 11th emergency special session.

In this context, concerning the threat of firearms to the security of the EU stemming from Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU clarified in its guidelines on border

* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

† Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

checks that the presence of firearms must continue to be checked, and that no one may enter the EU with a firearm without authorization. To this end, the EU encourages strengthened cooperation among its Member States and with the EU Agencies on the fight against firearms trafficking, including specific actions on the traceability of firearms by EU Member States and Ukrainian authorities to reduce the risk of trafficking of firearms. Since 2019, the EU by means of **Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2009** has been supporting Ukraine's efforts to combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives, in cooperation with the OSCE. The purpose of this Decision is to strengthen the capacities of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and the State Fiscal Service/State Customs Service of Ukraine. In addition, specific efforts will be made to increase controls at the EU's external borders, including with the support of specific EU funded projects and at operational level with the European Police Agency [EUROPOL] and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency [FRONTEX].

Turning to the topics on the agenda, and in particular the prevention and the fight against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in **ammunition**, the EU welcomes the different initiatives of UNODC and other international stakeholders and would like to stress the importance of this issue for the EU.

The acquisition, possession and transfer between EU Member States of ammunition is governed by the Firearms Directive and also the EU Regulation on import, export and transit of civilian firearms which regulates the operations involving ammunition.

Furthermore, since 2016 there is a specific action under the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Crime Threats (EMPACT) to explore possible solutions for exchanging ballistic data between different Ballistic Analysis Information Systems. The Platform is a joint effort of the Member States, Institutions and Agencies of the EU in the field of the integral control of firearms, essential parts and ammunition and the fight against their trafficking.

The EU also welcomes the presentation and discussions of a **multi-year work plan** for the Working Group on Firearms and offers its experience on the setting up of multi-year strategies and their implementing plans, such as with the 2020 EU Security Union Strategy and the corresponding **EU Action Plan** on firearms trafficking for the period 2020-25.

Under the UNTOC **review mechanism**, the EU is in charge of the review of Greece and Cyprus for their implementation of the Firearms Protocol. We have started our work as reviewers after having received their self-assessments recently. At the

same time, the EU is finalising its own self-assessment, which will be reviewed by Austria and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Finally, we take this opportunity to inform the Working Group of the current work of the EU on the revision of the EU **Regulation** [258/2012] implementing Article 10 of the Firearms Protocol, and establishing export authorisation, and import and transit measures for firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. This year, the EU will start a revision of this Regulation after 12 years of experience in its implementation by the Member States. With this initiative, the EU aims to achieve two specific objectives:

- Enabling coordinated controls and risk assessments, which implies first to ensure the traceability of firearms by improving exchange of information and improving the cooperation between customs and licensing authorities.
- Ensuring a level playing field and reducing the administrative burden placed on economic operators and firearms users by creating unified processes and control mechanisms.

This initiative is expected to harmonise further the national rules on import and export authorisations of firearms, their parts and components and ammunition in civilian transactions, in order to decrease the administrative burden of economic operators. Furthermore, this initiative is expected to strengthen the competent authorities in the prevention of and fight against the smuggling and diversion of firearms.

Thank you, Mr Chair.