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General and complete disarmament

Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context

Report of the Secretary-General

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* [A/76/50](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [75/51](#), the General Assembly reaffirmed the ways and means regarding confidence- and security-building measures set out in the report of the Disarmament Commission on its 1993 session, and it called upon Member States to pursue these ways and means through sustained consultations and dialogue, while at the same time avoiding actions that might hinder or impair such a dialogue. Furthermore, the Assembly urged States to comply strictly with all bilateral, regional and international agreements, including arms control and disarmament agreements, to which they were a party. The Assembly also emphasized that the objective of confidence-building measures should be to help to strengthen international peace and security and to be consistent with the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments, and it encouraged the promotion of bilateral and regional confidence-building measures, with the consent and participation of the parties concerned, to avoid conflict and prevent the unintended and accidental outbreak of hostilities. It requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session containing the views of Member States on confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

2. In that connection, notes verbales were sent to all Member States on 18 January 2021, requesting their views. To date, replies from the Governments of Albania, Cuba, Mexico and Ukraine have been received and are reproduced in section II below. A reply from the European Union has been received and is reproduced in section III below. Any views received after 31 May 2021 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in the language of submission. No addenda will be issued.

II. Replies received from Governments

Albania

[Original: English]
[31 May 2021]

The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Albania is a participant in various regional initiatives and initiatives in the field of security and defence. The focus is on cooperation and on maintaining an open dialogue between the parties in order to strengthen relations and build mutual trust and confidence.

More concretely in that regard:

- South-East Europe Defence Ministerial Process

In the second half of 2019, Albania assumed the leadership of the Process secretariat. In this initiative, Albania has promoted the relevance of the Process as a successful confidence-building mechanism in South-Eastern Europe, a platform that has strengthened the relations among our countries and has contributed to their proper efforts towards a common Euro-Atlantic future.

The Albanian priorities are consolidating the confidence-building mechanism; strengthening military cooperation in South-Eastern Europe; enhancing the level of interaction with other international entities, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union and the United Nations, and contributing to certain operations and missions with the Multinational Peace Force South-Eastern Europe; enhancing the interoperability and capability of the South-Eastern European

Brigade to be deployed in peace support operations; and promoting an “open-door” policy in order to reaffirm our commitment to the openness of our initiative, which contributes to peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

In addition, the Albanian Armed Forces are engaged in the framework of the Process with representatives at the headquarters of the South-Eastern European Brigade.

- United States-Adriatic Charter

In this initiative, Albania supports the “open-door” policy, the promotion of political dialogue and good-neighbourliness, the increasing of cooperation for joint representations, and efforts against terrorism and radical extremism.

- Balkan Medical Task Force

The aim of the Task Force is to enhance the utilization of existing military medical capabilities in the Western Balkan region within the framework of a multinational medical unit, facilitating deployability and sustainability for longer than one year.

- Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre – Centre for Security Cooperation

The mission of the Centre is to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in South-Eastern Europe through partnership between the countries of the region and their international partners.

- Central European Defence Cooperation

This collaboration enables the partner countries, including the Western Balkan countries, to strengthen regional security within the European Union and the Partnership for Peace, and in line with their national priorities, responsibilities and interests.

In addition, within the framework of bilateral cooperation with the countries of the region and beyond, the Ministry of Defence conducts continuous activities according to concrete joint cooperation plans. Even within the bilateral framework, the policy of the Ministry of Defence is to promote dialogue and cooperation.

With regard to its participation in international dual-use control regimes, Albania, through its State Export Control Authority, has initiated internal procedures for assessing possible engagement in the Wassenaar Arrangement. The assessment was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs as well as with all other institutions that will be part of the process. During the prior assessment conducted by the Ministry of Defence, the State Export Control Authority and the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs concluded that Albania complies fully with the application criteria.

However, the process of documenting the fulfilment of the application criteria and preparing the application file requires time, given that an exhaustive list of elements for each criterion should be submitted, with information regarding the legislative framework, policies, technical issues and statistics.

The Ministry of Defence and the State Export Control Authority are working on the process and gathering all information from all the institutions involved.

In addition, Albania is part of the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative, which was launched in 2010. The Initiative mirrors the Action Plan on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security implemented in the European Union. The main

objective of the Initiative is to facilitate regional cooperation in order to enhance chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear security capabilities.

The Government of the Republic of Albania remains committed to managing, controlling and combating the trafficking of small arms and light weapons, explosives and their precursors. The illegal trafficking and possession of weapons, explosives and their precursors, as well as weapons crimes, although declining every year, still appear to be a threat to human life, public order and security. When illegal weapons, ammunition and explosives are analysed in the context of national security and threats, such as the fight against terror, then their control and management, and the fight against the sector's illegal activities, take on a new dimension that needs special attention and resources.

Cooperation is based on confidence-building and on commitment to common goals that are in the interest of stability. Therefore, it could be carried out by honouring mutual agreements and understandings and by implementing the assumed obligations.

For Albania, as the Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe during 2020, the illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons rank among the most pressing security threats.

Albania is supporting and promoting all national initiatives and programmes regarding the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the area of confidence-building measures and beyond. The positive results are being achieved through very good coordination, cooperation and mutual support, with our partners in the security field such as NATO, the European Union and the United Nations.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[14 May 2021]

Confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms should be agreed upon on a voluntary and reciprocal basis, taking into account the legitimate security concerns and needs of all States involved and with respect for their sovereign equality and self-determination. At the same time, the voluntary nature of such measures and the characteristics and specificities of each country and region must be taken into account. This is the only way to ensure the effectiveness of such measures and to promote their universal adoption.

No State or group of States should gain advantages over others at any stage of the confidence-building process. Any such action would jeopardize the delicate balance on which confidence-building measures are based, erode the foundation of goodwill underlying them and undermine their effectiveness and the constructive participation on which they depend.

The Latin America and the Caribbean region has made a significant contribution to confidence-building by proclaiming itself a zone of peace. It is an honour for Cuba that the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States signed the Proclamation to that effect at their Second Summit, held in Havana in January 2014.

As a State party to the 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 and the Protocols thereto, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and other United

Nations programmes related to conventional weapons, such as the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, Cuba is fulfilling its obligations in good faith and submits its annual national implementation reports, in which it sets out the many control measures that it has established to ensure the security of conventional weapons. These measures include a willingness to work actively and constructively with other States parties to the above-mentioned instruments in order to assist and cooperate in their implementation. We believe that such exchanges of information contribute to mutual understanding and trust among States.

We also believe that information on confidence-building measures should not be limited to conventional weapons but should also include weapons of mass destruction, which have a much more devastating impact and therefore require greater transparency, communication and mutual understanding among States. As a State party to the main instruments on weapons of mass destruction, Cuba has regularly shared information concerning its national measures; we encourage States to intensify their efforts to exchange information regarding such weapons.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[31 May 2021]

Mexico is firmly committed to disarmament and non-proliferation and, in particular, to the measures and commitments adopted in order to maintain regional peace and security. Mexico supports the regional efforts currently being made to achieve that objective.

Mexico believes that confidence-building and cooperation are essential in responding to the complex challenges currently afflicting our societies. These challenges can only be addressed through transparency and the continuous exchange of information.

The Government of Mexico has various operational procedures in place to control the manufacture, storage, transport and use of weapons and ammunition for civilian use as required for the pursuit of justice, public security, hunting, sport and residential security.

The Ministry of Defence continues to destroy obsolete confiscated weaponry, as this is an effective contribution to conventional arms control. It also retains the exclusive right to offer for sale weapons and ammunition needed by Mexican public and private security forces, in accordance with the Federal Firearms and Explosives Act and in full compliance with international law.

The above-mentioned normative measures and activities comply with regional and subregional commitments related to confidence-building by regulating the import and export of firearms, ammunition and explosives of all kinds.

Mexico believes that conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels is also essential to confidence-building and the prevention of conflicts between States. In that regard, Mexico has always acted in accordance with its national laws and the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), promoting the implementation of confidence-building measures and compliance with obligations to develop such measures as a means of encouraging transparency and the exchange of information in the region.

Mexico continues to participate in hemispheric forums dedicated to the consideration of the confidence- and security-building measures agreed upon by OAS

member States; those forums are attended by experts from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Navy, the National Security Commission and other national agencies with security-related responsibilities.

Mexico supports and implements confidence-building measures within the framework of OAS. It is a party to all inter-American security agreements and conventions, contributing thereby to the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures in the hemisphere.

In May 2021, Mexico submitted to OAS its 2020 report on confidence- and security-building measures, in accordance with OAS General Assembly resolutions 2625 (XLI-O/11), “Confidence- and Security-Building in the Americas”, and 2950 (L-O/20), “Advancing Hemispheric Security: A Multidimensional Approach”, and with the Consolidated List of Confidence- and Security-Building Measures.

Mexico has also upheld its commitment to contributing to the development and implementation of measures arising from the work of the Working Group on Cooperation and Confidence-Building Measures in Cyberspace.

As it does every year, Mexico submitted its national report to the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and its report related to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction; it also submitted to OAS its report on the implementation of OAS General Assembly resolution 2950 (L-O/20), “Advancing Hemispheric Security: A Multidimensional Approach”.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, as from January 2020, the Mexican Armed Forces deployed six officers to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia as observers.

Lastly, Mexico has endeavoured to uphold its commitment to confidence-building measures by integrating and submitting its reports under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, both in order to fulfil its obligations under those conventions and to promote transparency. Mexico reiterates to the international community that it does not develop, possess or transfer any of these types of weapons of mass destruction.

Ukraine

[Original: English]
[31 May 2021]

Ukraine is an active participant of the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and remains fully committed to all agreed regional multilateral measures as well as the bilateral confidence- and security-building measures contained in its valid bilateral agreements with neighbouring States (Belarus, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania).

Ukraine continues to fulfil its commitments in the sphere of confidence- and security-building measures, even while deterring Russia’s ongoing armed aggression that has continued for over seven years, as well as in the circumstances of Russia’s occupation of part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine. Moreover, while countering Russian aggression, Ukraine, in cooperation with 34 partner States, struggles to modernize and update the Vienna Document in line with the current realities and security challenges in Europe in order to promote military

stability, transparency and predictability for all participating States, since, for 10 consecutive years, Russia has been sequentially creating such new, sharply dangerous realities in Europe based on military brinkmanship. At the heart of the current security challenges in Europe is Russia's violation of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, most notably through Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

In addition, the Russian Federation not only blocks the process of modernizing the toolbox of confidence- and security-building measures but also refuses to fulfil the provisions of chapter III (risk reduction) of the Vienna Document. Rather than fulfil and improve the valid regional regimes for arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in good faith, Russia continues to terminate them successively. Russia's policy of opposing the Vienna Document modernization, together with its aggressive activities, degrades tools for confidence- and security-building measures, reduces transparency, predictability and trust, and increases the risks and military threats in the European region. For seven consecutive years, Russia has engaged in flagrant violations of the norms and principles of international law and valid international treaties and arrangements, as well as engaging demonstratively in actions constituting a threat or use of force contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Russia tries to avoid the implementation of the confidence- and security-building measures and endeavours to extend its policy of "threat of force" and "military deterrence" to neighbouring and other European countries. Furthermore, Russia openly exacerbates military escalation along the State borders of Ukraine.

As underlined in General Assembly resolution [75/29](#) on the problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation make the international security and arms control architecture deteriorate, including as a result of the Russian temporary occupation of the territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which has had a destabilizing impact on international verification and arms control regimes, including those established by the Treaty on Open Skies, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Vienna Document 2011.

Since March 2021, Ukraine has again been under the threat of a new large-scale military attack by Russia owing to the unusual military activity of the Russian Armed Forces and the concentration of approximately 110,000 troops near Ukraine's eastern borders and in occupied Crimea. The large-scale military build-up gave rise to security concerns on the part of Ukraine and many other participating States and necessitated the activation of chapter III of the Vienna Document.

To the disappointment of many, the Russian side did not choose to engage in a meaningful dialogue to dispel Ukraine's legitimate concerns. The situation remains dangerous. There is a constant threat because of the presence of the Russian occupying forces in Ukrainian Crimea and certain parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Consequently, Ukraine demands that Russia:

- Fully take into consideration and fulfil the recommendations expressed by the partner States at the joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, on 14 April 2021, convened under chapter III of the Vienna Document, to reverse its dangerous actions and engage in a meaningful dialogue to dispel the concerns of European States over Russian military activity

- Take steps to de-escalate the situation and to engage in a meaningful dialogue and constructive consultations
- Ensure, in accordance with its commitments under the Vienna Document, the full transparency of its military activities, in particular regarding such fundamental components as the size and structure of permanently stationed troops in the respective areas and of additionally transferred troops involved in combat training, and the duration of their deployment
- Voluntarily host a visit to dispel concerns about its military activities, in accordance with the provisions in paragraph 18 of the Vienna Document
- Provide, in accordance with its commitments under the Vienna Document and in response to the procedure triggered in accordance with article 16 thereof, full transparency regarding its military activities in the areas in question, in particular regarding the size and structure of its troops permanently deployed in the areas concerned and of the additional troops recently deployed there, even if it involves routine training activities, as well as on the duration, locations, and temporary or permanent nature of the deployment
- Stop its aggression against Ukraine, withdraw Russia's armed forces, mercenaries and armed formations and weapons from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, reverse its illegal occupation of Crimea, de-occupy parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions and restore freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, through the Kerch Strait and in the Sea of Azov
- Implement General Assembly resolution [75/29](#) on the problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov

In addition, Ukraine calls upon all interested States to:

- Enhance the verification and monitoring measures regarding Russia's military activity on Ukrainian borders, as well as regarding the reduction and withdrawal of weapons and military equipment deployed by Russia
- Stimulate the Russian Federation to engage in a good-faith process of implementing and modernizing the Vienna Document in order to reduce security risks and improve predictability in the military sphere in the European region

III. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]

[31 May 2021]

In 2020, the European Union continued to work for the peaceful resolution of the problems of regional instability and insecurity and of conflict situations. The European Union continued its support for the establishment of regional and subregional confidence- and security-building measures as an important tool to build trust, enhance transparency and military predictability, avoid conflict and maintain stability, especially in situations of armed confrontation and areas of tension. On the basis of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, the European Union sought to advance the general arms control and disarmament processes.

Building trust incrementally and carefully is important in a mediation process. Trust needs to be built around the process constructed by the mediation and the parties, by conducting pre-talks, developing methodologies and using a shared language. Clarity about the process enables trust. Confidence-building measures can

be a tool in building trust before the talks and at the beginning or in the middle of the negotiations.

While there is no universally accepted definition, confidence-building measures can be defined as actions or processes undertaken in all phases of a conflict cycle with the aim of increasing transparency and the level of trust and confidence between two or more conflict parties. Confidence-building initiatives, if applied early on when tensions arise, can play a role in preventing the outbreak of conflict in the first place. Confidence-building measures can help to improve relations. They can facilitate a more conducive environment for a peaceful political solution. They can be part of the enabling conditions and success factors that effectively address both domestic and international actors, as well as the environment in which they operate. If successful, confidence-building measures can themselves become key steps that form part of a peaceful political transition.

Several current protracted conflicts reflect the largely stalled track-one-process mediation efforts. Among the various factors that bring peace processes to a halt, the loss of trust and confidence is fundamental. In mediation processes, the European Union has made repeated efforts to engage key actors and present new options that could bring parties back to the negotiating table. The introduction of specific ceasefire monitoring to be shared by all parties involved is a measure to build confidence and trust on the security of information.

In the Middle East and elsewhere, a proxy element of conflict – whereby international and regional States are indirectly involved in a conflict by supporting armed factions on the ground or are directly engaged to support one side or the other – provides little incentive to commit to peace processes and negotiations. Confidence-building initiatives become all the more important in such cases, whether implemented between and among national-level parties to a conflict, regional and international actors, or broader constituencies of citizens. As regional and international actors become involved in confidence-building measures, however, citizen inclusivity often experiences a downturn because of the design of such processes. The European Union has been promoting the importance of the inclusion of civil society in all peace processes in which it is involved and in all phases, through globally significant support for track II and track III dialogues to ensure that civil society constituencies are consulted and their ideas heard.

The European Union has consistently been supporting and promoting the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation as the only multilateral transparency and confidence-building instrument addressing the spread of ballistic missiles. The European Union advocates the universality, full implementation and enhanced functioning of the Code. The diplomatic support of the European Union for the Code is enhanced by a number of European Council decisions financing outreach activities, including side events, research papers, expert meetings and regional awareness seminars conducted by the Paris-based Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, usually also involving the rotating Code Chair. The European Union continues to promote the Code under Council decision (CFSP) 2017/2370 of 18 December 2017 in support of the Hague Code of Conduct and ballistic missile non-proliferation in the framework of the implementation of the European Union Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions represent a serious threat to international peace and security and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. Since its opening for signature, in 1996, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has helped to stop that practice while serving as a strong confidence- and security-building measure internationally, regionally and bilaterally. The European Union believes that the entry into force of the Treaty, through its

signature and ratification by the remaining annex 2 States, will constitute a tangible step towards building trust and peace. All States members of the European Union have demonstrated their commitment to the Treaty by ratifying it and applying its basic obligations.

In 2020, the European Union engaged in diplomatic activities in support of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that were adapted to the limited opportunities resulting from the global pandemic situation. Promoting the entry into force of the Treaty was one of the action items of the initiative of the Secretary-General, *Securing our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament*, that the European Union decided to support. The European Union has repeatedly called for the ratification of the Treaty in its statements in related forums, as well as in its bilateral contacts with the remaining annex 2 and non-annex 2 countries. The European Union consistently promotes the benefits and contribution of the Treaty to peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation, including in its civil applications. The financial support of the European Union for the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, as outlined in Council decision (CFSP) 2018/298 on Union support for the activities of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization in order to strengthen its monitoring and verification capabilities, continued throughout 2020. The European Union and its member States also contributed to the maintenance and strengthening of the Treaty verification regime through the provision of technical support and advice to Working Group B of the Treaty Organization and other workshops and seminars. The European Union participated actively in the sessions of the Preparatory Commission and its Working Groups A and B.

The European Union acknowledges the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones for peace and security, in accordance with article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The European Union recognizes that treaty-based security assurances are available to nuclear-weapon-free zones and encourages nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify the relevant protocols of the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones drawn up following the requisite consultations. The European Union also calls upon States in existing nuclear-weapon-free zones that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the relevant nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. In June 2019, ministers of the European Union member States adopted Council decision (CFSP) 2019/938, which provided funding for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research in support of a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The European Union continues to call upon all States in the region that have not yet done so to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Doing so would be an important confidence- and security-building measure and could constitute a tangible step towards the establishment of a zone.

The European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative, launched in 2010, is an initiative of the European Union. The Initiative addresses the mitigation of and preparedness against risks related to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material and agents. The origin of these risks can be criminal (proliferation, theft, sabotage and illicit trafficking), accidental (industrial catastrophes, in particular chemical or nuclear, waste treatment and transport) or natural (mainly pandemics, but also as a consequence of natural hazards associated with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material and facilities). The Initiative seeks to boost national, regional and international cooperation and to develop a common and coherent chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk mitigation policy at the national and regional

levels. Risk mitigation comprises prevention, preparedness and post-event management.

The main objective of the Initiative is to facilitate regional cooperation in order to enhance chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk mitigation awareness, readiness and capabilities at the national and regional levels. The goal is achieved by establishing a network of relevant institutions and agencies in partner countries, European Union services, experts of States members of the European Union, international organizations and local expertise, which supports partner countries in developing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk assessment and mitigation methodology and guidelines; creating chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear national teams; promoting chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear cooperation and dialogue among internal (national) institutions and agencies; developing national chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear action plans; liaising with other partner countries to identify regional chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear priorities; drafting tailored project proposals; analysing project proposals at the regional level; identifying and implementing targeted projects of regional concern to address specific needs (for example, training, procedures, workshops, equipment); and promoting the use of national, regional and international chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear capabilities for the implementation of projects.

The Initiative is led, financed and implemented by the European Commission, in close coordination with the European External Action Service and with the support of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and other international organizations and local experts. European Union delegations in partner countries are also deeply involved in the Initiative, ensuring visibility and political support. The Initiative is developed with the technical support of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the States members of the European Union and other stakeholders, through coherent and effective cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. Experts in on-site technical assistance are also made available by the Commission to support project implementers, strengthen cooperation with local authorities and enhance the technical capacity relating to the Initiative.

The Initiative network consists of 62 partner countries grouped and facilitated by eight regional secretariats for, respectively, the African Atlantic façade; Central Asia; Eastern and Central Africa, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries; the Middle East; North Africa and the Sahel; South-East Asia; and South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. The regional secretariats, which are hosted by one country in each region, play a major role in fostering cooperation and coordination between countries in the region. They support the activities carried out within the overall framework of the Initiative and contribute to local ownership and improved sustainability of the network of centres of excellence. A series of projects is currently supported under the Initiative. By following a bottom-up approach ensuring that the projects address the priorities of both European Union and partner countries, they target specific needs that have been identified regarding chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk mitigation. These include matters such as export control, illicit trafficking, border monitoring, biosafety and biosecurity. Since 2010, the European Union has funded around 85 regional projects. The budget for the Initiative for the 10-year period starting in 2010 amounts to approximately €250 million. National experts from the regions are invited and encouraged to join existing projects and participate actively in the preparation of new projects.

Where appropriate, the Initiative works in cooperation with international and regional partners, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; the Office for Disarmament Affairs; the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, the World Health Organization, the World Organization for Animal Health, the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the International Science and Technology Centre and the G7 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. Each of these partners contributes its own unique expertise in accordance with its institutional mandate. One practical avenue of cooperation is the organization of training events with the Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Centre of Excellence in Vyskov, Czech Republic, which is accredited by the North American Treaty Organization. The first such event was organized in late 2017.

With European Union support, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) implements projects for strengthening biological safety and security in Ukraine in line with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the European Union Association Agreement with Ukraine. Under European Council decision (CFSP) 2019/1296 of 31 July 2019 in support of strengthening biological safety and security in Ukraine in line with the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, activities are funded to harmonize existing Ukrainian regulations on biosafety and biosecurity with international standards, to establish a sustainable veterinary surveillance system in Ukraine and to raise awareness among and train life scientists on biosafety and biosecurity. Through Council decision (CFSP) 2017/1252 of 11 July 2017 in support of the strengthening of chemical safety and security in Ukraine in line with the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, the European Union also supports the strengthening of chemical safety and security in Ukraine. States members of the European Union are parties to the Treaty on Open Skies and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and observe the politically binding provisions of the Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in line with the spirit and principles of support for multilateralism and the rule of law that the European Union upholds.

In December 2019, the European Council adopted decision (CFSP) 2019/2108 of 9 December 2019 in support of strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America in line with the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, which provides for €2.7 million over three years. The funding will allow the Organization of American States (OAS) to provide technical and legislative assistance to beneficiary countries to strengthen regulations on biosafety and biosecurity and ensure their harmonization with international standards, to promote and enhance regional cooperation, and to raise awareness of, educate in and organize training on biosafety and biosecurity. The regional cooperation will also include peer reviews, with States voluntarily agreeing to work together to assess their mutual strengths and weakness in implementing obligations under Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and to identify effective practices and areas for continued bilateral cooperation.

Building national capacities and strengthening regional cooperation remain central to the efforts of the European Union, as set out in its strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which was adopted in 2018. In this context, the European Union cooperates closely with United Nations regional centres and with regional and subregional organizations.

In South-Eastern Europe, the European Union continues to provide significant support for capacity-building relating to small arms control through the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons,

which operates under the United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Cooperation Council. Furthermore, the European Union supports the implementation of the road map for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition in the western Balkans by 2024, which was adopted at the Western Balkans Summit held in London in July 2018 and for which action plans have been agreed. In addition, the European Union supported the activities of OSCE to reduce the risk of illicit trafficking and the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition in the Republic of North Macedonia and Georgia (Council decision (CFSP) 2017/1424 of 4 August 2017 in support of OSCE activities to reduce the risk of illicit trafficking and excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Georgia) and to combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives in Ukraine (Council decision (CFSP) 2019/2009 of 2 December 2019 in support of Ukraine's efforts to combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives, in cooperation with the OSCE).

The European Union strongly supports African-led efforts in the area of peace and security, including the African Union ambition to “silence the guns by 2020”. The activities of the European Union related to small arms and light weapons control are implemented in close partnership with the African Union, its member States, the United Nations and regional organizations, notably the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Southern African Development Community. The support provided by the European Union for Africa's peace and security architecture funded by the African Peace Facility has helped to improve physical security and stockpile management in existing conventional arms and ammunition depots in the Central African Republic and the Sahel region and to collect and destroy arms and ammunition across West Africa. In July 2019, the European Council adopted a new decision (CFSP) 2019/1298 of 31 July 2019 in support of an Africa-China-Europe dialogue and cooperation on preventing the diversion of arms and ammunition in Africa.

For the first time, the European Union and the League of Arab States have entered into a partnership on capacity-building in the area of arms control and countering illicit trafficking in conventional arms. Experts of the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL are contributing to this effort.

In Latin America, the European Union contributes to the enhancement of small arms control capacities of several Latin American and Caribbean States through OAS. Activities include stockpile management, training and legislation.

The capacity-building activities of the European Union have contributed to the overall strengthening of national export control systems worldwide, as demonstrated by the European Union outreach project in support of the Arms Trade Treaty and a European Council decision on promoting effective arms export controls.

The European Union also has a long history of support for actions that address the threat posed by mines, whether legacy mines or new contamination, and the explosive remnants of war. The total assistance provided by the European Union and its member States in the past five years amounts to more than €800 million for mine action activities in mine-contaminated countries, including Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Iraq, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Syria and Ukraine.

Many of the other European Union assistance activities are focused on promoting universal adherence to and national implementation of key international instruments, including the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#), to name just a few.