



**United States Mission to the OSCE**  
**U.S. Statement for the**  
**Forum for Security Cooperation:**  
**Security Dialogue on Humanitarian Demining**

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko  
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Thank you, Mr. Chair,

And thank you to our distinguished panel of experts for sharing their insights with us today.

Thanks, too, to Croatia for raising this important topic and for its dedication to clearing mines within its borders and beyond. Croatia also deserves special recognition for sharing its technical knowledge with mine-affected countries across the globe and for hosting an international donor conference in Zagreb in October that rallied nearly 500 million euros in pledges to support humanitarian demining operations in Ukraine.

The United States shares Croatia's dedication to landmine clearance and conventional weapons destruction. Since 1993, we have invested more than \$5 billion in the clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war as well as in the strengthening of our partners' capacity to manage small arms, light weapons, and ammunition in more than 125 countries and areas.

In fiscal year 2023 alone, the United States contributed approximately \$400 million to support conventional weapons destruction efforts in over 82 countries and areas. Included in that total are OSCE participating States Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

What motivates the United States and many other countries to serve as donors is the transformative effect humanitarian demining has on countries. Demining promotes food security by allowing more land to be farmed safely. It fosters economic development by opening land to new opportunities. It promotes stability and allows people to move beyond a painful past and look forward to a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Effective and efficient demining operations depend heavily on the collection and processing of contamination data. For this data to be effective, national mine action authorities need to have well-managed information management systems, a skilled workforce trained on those systems, and a national demining strategy that both shapes how the data is collected and how it is used to inform survey and clearance operations.

No two demining responses are identical. For example, the process of clearing Russia's anti-personnel mines in Ukraine is very different than clearing ISIS mines in Iraq. Nevertheless, the lessons learned by our government and U.S.-funded NGOs and contractors conducting urban clearance operations in areas of Iraq and Syria liberated from ISIS are universally applicable and are being used to inform clearance operations in Ukraine.

As proud as we all are of these admirable efforts done for mine clearance, we cannot help but be angered when we consider that, in Ukraine, all of this — every death, every disabling injury, the pain and suffering, the loss of productivity, and the sheer expense of this cleanup which we are all bearing — all of this was unnecessary. All of it flows from an illegal and unprovoked war of aggression.

Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and its continued, reckless, and wide-spread use of landmines, underscores the fact that landmines will remain an unfortunate reality for decades to come. We can expect the problem of mine contamination worldwide to increase, and therefore, the number of donors and resources dedicated to demining must also increase to meet this challenge. We encourage all participating States to increase their investment in humanitarian mine action operations and innovations to whatever extent that they are able. We also welcome the OSCE's demining support to Ukraine through its Support Program for Ukraine.

Almost as critical as the financial resources for demining is the sharing of best practices and lessons learned from clearance operations. In this regard, the OSCE's Integrated Cooperation on Explosive Hazards program supports participating States in addressing the concerns and challenges stemming from explosive hazards. The program's Regional Explosives Hazards Training Centre in Tajikistan provides a regionally recognized and certified training program that also serves as a platform for exchanging experiences and best practices. More than a

dozen OSCE participating States have already benefitted from the Center's offering, and the United States is proud to support this effort.

As landmines and other explosive hazards continue to hinder post-conflict recovery, delay economic development, and threaten human lives, the mine action community must continue to improve the coordination of its efforts, information, and data in order to realize a safe, prosperous, and secure world free from their malign effects.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.