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Open Letter to Members of European Parliament

FIREARMS UNITED brings together more than 200 million law-abiding gun owners in Europe. These include reservists, hunters, sport shooters, collectors, firearm dealers, manufacturers, security professionals, range operators and ordinary citizens who own not restricted weapons.

We express our deep grief for the victims of the Paris attack and all other victims of terrorism and crime world-wide.

We fully support any effective measures that may help to prevent such heinous crimes in the future. For this reason we support the recent introduction of stringent deactivation regulations as well as sensible control of blank firing guns. Moreover we also support action against those Member States that do not transpose such regulations into national law or do not enforce them properly.

However, we strongly oppose the proposed drastic measures which in the absence of a serious impact assessment only serve to punish law-abiding citizens and negatively affect their livelihood, destroy legally-held possessions including rare, historical and artistic artefacts and even pose a threat to national defence and individual security. Moreover we are angered by the fact that it is obvious to anyone with a modicum of logic that such measures would be futile as they would not cause the slightest dent in the activity of illicit trafficking which supplies illegal firearms to criminals and terrorists.

Most of the measures drafted by the Firearms Task Force that was set up by former DG Home Commissioner Cecilia Malmström and which is still headed by Fabio Marini would be totally ineffective against the stated objective of targeting illicit trafficking while they would severely impinge on the rights of EU Citizens who contribute to the various sectors of society. The proposed measures are totally destructive in nature towards such citizens while representing a dangerous diversion of resources from the fight against illicit trafficking of firearms.

It is also of concern to note that the publication of these measures was preceded by dishonest misinformation and an unsuccessful campaign funded with taxpayers' money to create a pretext for such drastic measures:

There were rumours since the 20th of October, three weeks before the bloody attack in Paris, that EC also wants to ban internet sales and semi-automatic rifles. The gun rights advocates made inquiries in Brussels. "There were no plans for it, only for deactivated firearms", said Fabio Marini. And then he presented the new proposal with drastic bans and drastic restrictions which are a threat to national and individual security. The persons responsible for this state of affairs should be held to account.¹

¹ "History of Action Plan on Firearms," Report: Firearms in Europe, <http://bit.ly/1Oo1axX>

If implemented, these measures would:

- a) Actually **undermine national security** by creating a vacuum in countries that rely on active reserve forces;
- b) **Endanger law-abiding citizens** by banning firearms, blank firing guns and live-saving firearms kept for self-defense and protection;
- c) **Eradicate a number of sport shooting disciplines** and other legal pastimes;
- d) **Destroy the livelihood** of hundreds of thousands of people who earn an honest living in the legal arms trade;
- e) **Damage and destroy important historical artefacts** held by collectors and museums;
- f) **Destroy the beneficial activity of serious collectors** who conserve historic arms;
- g) **Take bureaucracy to a level that chokes trade** and places costly burdens on governments;
- h) **Bring about a huge financial burden on national budgets** and to the taxpayers who have to pay for the wanton destruction of their own property;
- i) **Divert badly-needed resources in the fight against organised crime** towards pointless punitive action against potential victims of crime and terrorism;

It is our view that the proposed measures go against the fundamental values that form the basis of the EU and which in still mutual trust between governments and civil society. They should be withdrawn before they set a dangerous precedent in the manner that EU regulations are introduced without sufficient transparency and democratic checks and balances. The EU is not particularly popular among its citizens in these times and a hasty decision such as this would surely alienate more people who would openly question the validity and benefit of EU membership of their respective countries.

The current Firearms Directive is an effective tool for security and does not unnecessarily obstruct legal activity. EU Member States that faithfully transposed the Directive into their national laws and applied proper enforcement enjoy positive results. What is necessary is further collaboration between Member States to learn from those that successfully applied the Directive effectively and to implement measures that harmonise the procedures for better control. That is the way to earn citizens' trust and cooperation in keeping Europe safe.

We approve harmonising standards and rules for deactivation, blank weapons and markings.

We disapprove the whole "Proposal for a Directive amending Council Directive 91/477/EEC."

Finally one must surely consider that no matter how restrictive a law is, it will only apply to those who follow it. By definition criminals and terrorists will not be deterred by laws and regulations.

For more information we recommend reading the detailed position by FACE which represents over seven million hunters in response to the first draft of these proposed measures: <http://bit.ly/1T7WWfw>ⁱ

ⁱ [FACE'S RESPONSE TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S COMMUNICATION ON FIREARMS:](#)