EU Statement

By

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Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

2. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery remains a grave threat to international peace and security. While the international treaty regimes and export controls arrangements have slowed the spread of WMD and their delivery systems, a number of States have sought or are seeking to develop such weapons. The risk that terrorists could acquire such weapons, material and means of delivery adds an increasingly critical dimension to this threat.

3. The EU finds it deeply shocking that the international community is still confronted with the use of chemical weapons despite international law prohibiting them. The use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, anywhere, and under any circumstances is abhorrent and must be rigorously condemned. There can be no impunity and those responsible for such acts must be held accountable.

4. The EU recalls that as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic has explicitly obligated itself not to possess, develop or use chemical weapons. The EU notes with great concern the successive reports of the OPCW Director General of July 2016, March 2017 and July 2017, according to which the Organization is not able to confirm that the Syrian declaration regarding its chemical weapons programme is complete and accurate. We urge the government of the Syrian Arab Republic to extend full cooperation to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to resolve all outstanding issues related to its initial and subsequent declarations and convince the international community that its chemical weapons programme has been destroyed in a complete and irreversible manner. In this regard, we strongly urge Syria to use its ‘frozen assets’ to fully meet all its obligations under the Convention regarding the costs arising in connection with the elimination of its chemical weapons programme and the verification thereof.

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* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
5. The EU notes with great concern the confirmation by the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) of the use of sarin in a chemical weapons attack in Khan Sheikhoun on 4 April 2017 and exposure of victims to sulphur mustard in Um-Housh on 16 September 2016 and the conclusions of the August and October 2016 reports of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) which confirm that the Syrian Armed Forces were responsible for three chemical attacks, and Da'esh for one. The EU supports and encourages the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, in partnership with the Fact Finding Mission and in conformity with its mandate, to promptly identify those responsible for such use of chemical weapons. The EU looks forward to the timely renewal of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and its continuing investigations into further outstanding allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria.

6. The EU continues to support activities in all areas of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including national implementation, assistance and protection, international cooperation and in particular the Africa Programme. More than 12 million EUR have been provided to this end to the OPCW since 2004 through voluntary contributions, along with a further 20 million EUR in support of the OPCW-Syria related activities and 4,6 million EUR in support of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism.

7. The EU expresses satisfaction with the progress of destruction of the remaining Libyan chemicals stockpile. We commend the OPCW for the planning and execution of the safe removal and destruction of the chemicals to which several EU Member States contributed. The EU and its Member States reaffirm their support for the implementation of the destruction plan.

8. We underscore that universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention remains a top priority for the EU. We once again call upon those States not yet Party to the CWC – the DPRK, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan – to join the Convention without further delay, thus contributing to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

9. Our commitment to the strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) remains firm although the outcome of the 2016 Review Conference did not reach our substantive expectations despite the significant efforts of the Hungarian Presidency and the vast majority of States Parties. In the absence of a dedicated effective intersessional programme, the EU-funded project activities, amounting to 6,3 million EUR since 2006, have become a key vehicle in promoting universal adherence to the Convention and advancing national implementation in countries around the world. We are working closely with States Parties to ensure that they address the following priorities: building and sustaining confidence in compliance,
supporting national implementation, supporting the UN Secretary General’s Mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons, promoting universality among the States not yet party to the Convention, and taking into account developments in science and technology. We call on all States not yet party to join the BTWC without delay.

10. At the same time, assistance provided through voluntary contributions, such as EU Council Decisions should not be seen as a substitute to activities to be carried out within the framework of formal BTWC meetings. We are of the opinion that the discussions on an intersessional programme during the Eighth Review Conference, as well as the wealth of working papers and proposals put forward in this context, represent a good starting point for the next Meeting of States Parties with a view to reaching consensus on the establishment of substantive intersessional programme of work.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The DPRK’s repeated ballistic missile launches, conducted outside the existing transparency and pre-notification schemes and in clear violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions, represent a grave threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as to the international non-proliferation regime. We condemn in the strongest terms the DPRK’s nuclear tests and multiple ballistic missile launches, and express our grave concern in particular over the recent missile launches of intercontinental range. We urge the DPRK to immediately halt its launches and fully comply with all its international obligations. We express concern at the prospect of growing proliferation from the DPRK towards others, and are determined to act to counter such activities.

12. We underscore the importance of Iran abiding by all provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology. We take very seriously recent launches by Iran and call upon Iran to refrain from activities which may deepen mistrust, such as ballistic missiles tests, which are inconsistent with UNSCR 2231 and destabilising for the region. EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs at their meeting on 16 October have adopted a statement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The full text of the statement is available for Delegates’ convenience in the room. We are concerned over the destabilising role of missile proliferation in the Middle East, including in Syria.
13. All 28 EU Member States have subscribed to The Hague Code of Conduct (HCoC) which is the only multilateral transparency and confidence-building instrument against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. The EU will continue to promote the universality, full implementation and enhanced functioning of the Code. We call on all States, in particular those with significant activities in the area of ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles, to adhere to the Code as soon as possible. We are also in favour of examining further multilateral steps to prevent the threat of missile proliferation and to promote disarmament efforts in the missile field.

14. The EU is pleased to see that this year the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is celebrating its 30th anniversary. The MTCR continues to play a crucial role in tackling the proliferation of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technologies. The EU strongly supports the work of the international export control regimes such as the MTCR, the Australia Group, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement. Strong and coordinated national and international export controls are essential to prevent certain goods, intangible technologies and software from falling into wrong hands. A specific EU control list of dual use items makes the goods listed in these export control regimes legally binding for and directly applicable in all EU Member States. All 28 EU Member States are therefore interested in participating in the work of the international export control regimes and we invite others to support their membership.

Mr. Chairman,

15. The EU warmly welcomes last year's comprehensive review process of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 whose centrality, importance and authority was reaffirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 2325. Continued vigilance by all States is required to prevent and deter non-State actors from obtaining weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery or related material. The new EU Council Decision, adopted on 11 May 2017, will provide further assistance to interested States to enhance their national capabilities in implementing UNSCR 1540 and facilitate greater cooperation among all relevant stakeholders.

16. Over the past year, the EU's initiative on Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence provided technical capacity building assistance to more than 60 countries and 8 regions. More than 30 partner countries have been supported by the EU to assess their national CBRN needs. Based on these needs assessments, more than 20 countries have already prepared CBRN National Action Plans in order to tackle CBRN risks of intentional, accidental or natural
origin. In addition, the EU has provided funding to more than 60 regional capacity-building and training projects as well as table top and cross-border field exercises to test and improve prevention, preparedness for, response and recovery from CBRN related acts, such as dirty bombs, illicit trafficking or terrorism financing. We invite all countries to perform analysis of their national CBRN risks and identify capacity-building needs with the aim to enhance national ownership, donor coordination and resource mobilisation.

17. In addition, the EU P2P Export Control Outreach programme currently covers 34 countries from 6 regions with the aim to enhance the effectiveness of national export control systems of dual-use items and related materials, equipment and technologies.

18. Furthermore, the EU and its Member States support other international mechanisms designed to prevent WMD proliferation, such as the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Proliferation Security Initiative. EU Member States play an active role in initiatives in other fields such as the Global Health Security Agenda, which can also contribute to some non-proliferation efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman