EU Statement

By

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Mr. Chairman,

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

2. Promotion of gender equality, gender consciousness, empowerment of women and prevention of sexual and gender based violence is an important horizontal priority for the European Union. We believe that the active and equal participation and leadership of woman in decision making and action, including in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, is crucial in achieving peace, security and sustainable development. The EU will continue to promote the full implementation of Resolution 1325 and all other relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council aimed at advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

3. At this 20th anniversary year of the signature of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the EU and its Member States reiterate their full support for this important Convention and to the implementation of the Maputo Action Plan in order to fulfil the aspiration to achieve an anti-personnel mine free world without new victims by 2025. The humanitarian impact of the Convention has been remarkable, more than 51 million anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, 87 of 90 States have declared to no longer hold stockpiles, 30 of 61 States no longer have mined areas on territory under their jurisdiction or control, and the situation for the majority of mine victims is significantly better today than it was two decades ago.

4. The EU continues to provide significant assistance, in particular for the clearance and destruction of mines, booby-traps and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), to victims and for mine risk education in the most heavily affected countries and regions of the world, including in Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Syria and Ukraine. In 2016 alone, the EU and its Member States committed more than EUR 100 million to mine action worldwide. A new EU Council Decision, worth to EUR 2.3 million, was adopted on 4 August 2017, to promote universal adherence to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and support the efforts of States Parties to implement the mine clearance, victim assistance and the stockpile destruction aspects of the Maputo Action Plan. We are committed to fulfilling our obligations concerning international cooperation and assistance, and in this regard, support the individualised approach pursued under the Convention.

5. The EU supports the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We are deeply concerned about the reported indiscriminate use of cluster munitions affecting civilian populations in different parts of the world and the increasing number of victims. The EU calls upon all actors to refrain from such use and to fully observe the

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*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*
principles of International Humanitarian Law. We recall that States Parties at the 2016 Meeting agreed by consensus to implement their outstanding obligations before 2030. We note progress on implementing the Dubrovnik Action Plan, as reported during the 7th Meeting of States Parties (7MSP) in September. We welcome the Country Coalition Concept, which aims at enhancing national ownership and donor coordination in affected States and we also see the need for further exchange of views with non-States Parties to the Convention, as initiated by the German Presidency of 7MSP.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The EU supports efforts to universalise and strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We welcome the successful outcome of the Fifth Review Conference and look forward to further substantive work and discussions.

7. We recognise the challenges associated with the use of explosive weapons and munitions in densely populated areas and their potential impact on civilians and call on all parties to armed conflict to fully comply with International Humanitarian Law. We stress the importance of compliance with all CCW provisions and annexed Protocols, and thus remain concerned about allegations of air-delivered incendiary weapons against targets located within a concentration of civilians in Syria.

8. The EU supported the decision at the Fifth Review Conference of the CCW to establish a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). Regrettably, outstanding financial contributions by some States prevented the GGE from undertaking its task earlier this year. In our view, the GGE, in accordance with its mandate, should enable discussion on a range of issues including a working definition of LAWS, and the application of, and compliance with International Humanitarian Law, taking into account that such fully autonomous systems do not exist at the moment. Without prejudice to its outcome, the work in the GGE could pave the way for identifying possible best practices and policy guidelines.

9. We express our concern over the increasing global impact of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) attacks worldwide and their indiscriminate use and effects in particular in the perpetration of terrorist acts which have grown dramatically in recent years. We welcome UN Security Council Resolution 2370 of 2 August 2017 which calls for more stringent national measures to prevent the supply of weapons and explosive precursors to terrorists. All EU Member States have supported the UN General Assembly Resolution and the political declaration on IEDs within the Amended Protocol II to the CCW. Several EU Member States have been engaged in the UNMAS-led initiative on IED Disposal Standards (IEDDS), which will continue to be developed in cooperation with relevant stakeholders and should supplement the current framework of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). The EU will continue to provide assistance to third countries to strengthen their capacities to counter the impact of IEDs.

10. Furthermore, we express our concern over the humanitarian impact and the heavy consequences on social and economic development caused by the indiscriminate and
disproportionate use of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), while acknowledging that they can be used as legitimate weapons, provided appropriate safeguards are present to ensure the protection of civilians in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. We believe that further expert discussions in the CCW are valuable.

11. We reiterate our support for Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War and look forward to discussing the proposal by the Chair on a provision of experts assistance for national reporting.

Mr. Chairman,

12. The EU and its Member States firmly support the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and call on all States to join it. The ATT is a robust, balanced and effective international instrument with the objective to establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms and ammunition, and preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms and ammunition and preventing their diversion from the licit international trade. The ATT should contribute to international and regional peace, security and stability, reduce human suffering and promote cooperation, transparency and responsible action by States Parties. Significantly reducing illicit arms flows is also one of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably Sustainable Development Goal 16.4, which the EU strongly supports.

13. In line with the outcome of the Third Conference of States Parties, the EU underlines the importance of stepping up substantive work on universalisation, transparency and reporting, and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as encouraging further contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund. A new EU Outreach Programme, worth more than 7 million EUR, was adopted by the EU Council on 29 May 2017 in order to provide further support to States to strengthen national export controls and successfully implement their ATT obligations.

14. Within the EU, the 2008 Common Position defines common rules governing the control of exports of military technology and equipment of the 28 EU Member States. Every request for an arms export licence for an item listed in the EU Common Military List has to be assessed against risk criteria, such as human rights and humanitarian law violations including gender based violence, diversion, and internal or regional instability.

15. The diversion, illicit trade and unauthorised use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunition constitute serious impediments for peace, security and development. The UN Programme of Action (UN PoA) on SALW and the International Tracing Instrument provide the only universal and consensual framework on SALW to encourage further national, regional and international action to tackle the scourge of illicit SALW proliferation. Since the unanimous adoption of the UN Programme of Action in 2001, the EU has supported its implementation through a whole range of assistance projects, including support for collection and destruction of surplus SALW; physical
security and stockpile management (PSSM); and capacity building for arms export control, marking, record keeping, tracing and law enforcement, including the provision of equipment. We also support UN Security Council resolutions on SALW and on Women, Peace and Security.

16. On 3 April 2017, EU Ministers adopted a new Council Decision, worth of EUR 2.8 million, with the aim to pave the way for a successful Third Review Conference of the UN PoA in 2018. Four thematic symposia will be organised to produce action-oriented findings on key topics related to SALW control, notably on tracing and stockpile management in conflict affected areas, the link with the Sustainable Development Goals, recent technological developments, and synergies with other instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty. Five regional conferences will allow for further engagement with government representatives and regional organisations. The EU welcomes the complementary initiative on ammunition which could possibly lead to a new Group of Governmental Experts as proposed in the draft Resolution on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles in Surplus.

17. Several EU Member States have taken up important offices in disarmament and non-proliferation fora over the past year, notably Austria on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, Finland on the Arms Trade Treaty, France on the UN Programme of Action on SALW, Germany on the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the UK for the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. Their leadership has helped to address cross-cutting issues, such as the dire financial situation of the Geneva-based conventions which remains a matter of serious concern to the EU and needs to be resolved. We urge all States Parties to ensure that those Conventions can operate in an effective and efficient manner. The Presidencies held by EU Member States have also provided the possibility to explore further cooperation and synergies between various instruments bearing in mind the importance of coordinated mine action and effective arms export controls for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

18. The EU looks forward to further cooperation with interested countries and regions, in partnership with civil society, academia, industry and international and regional organisations in order to promote universal adherence to and effective implementation of these crucial instruments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.