European Union
General Statement by

H.E. Mr Peter Sørensen, Ambassador,
Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations and
other international organisations in Geneva

Fifth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional
Weapons Geneva, 12-16 December 2016

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Geneva, 12 December 2016
Madam President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Albania*, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this Statement.

At the outset, let me thank you, for your leadership towards ensuring a successful Fifth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). You can count on the strong support of the European Union. I would also like to express our appreciation to the Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for its important administrative and substantive support.

Let us also thank you for your determination to secure the holding of the Review Conference despite the serious financial challenges the Convention is facing. We wish to underscore that timely contributions by all High Contracting Parties, and the payment of all outstanding arrears, are absolutely necessary in order to secure the effective functioning of the Convention and its Protocols and the valuable work of the ISU. In this regard, transparency is essential for further improving the financial situation.

The Ministers of the 28 Member States of the European Union have adopted a common EU position for the Review Conference reiterating the EU's long-standing commitment to the CCW and its Protocols. The CCW is a unique international instrument gathering diplomatic, legal and military expertise. It is an important part of International Humanitarian Law which contributes to preventing and reducing the suffering of both civilians and combatants. The EU underlines the importance to maintain the Convention responsive to new developments and strengthen its implementation.

The universalisation of the CCW and its Protocols remains among our priorities. We support all efforts towards the widest possible adherence to the Convention and its Protocols and we

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
strongly encourage all countries that have not yet done so to adhere to them as soon as possible.

The European Union attaches high importance to transparency and building confidence in ensuring full implementation of, and compliance with the Convention and its Protocols. In this respect, we encourage all High Contracting Parties to fulfil their legal, technical and reporting obligations on an annual basis. We welcome the proposal in the context of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) to establish a mechanism to assist in improving the rate and quality of national reporting, preferably through the establishment of a voluntary, military roster of experts.

We express our deep 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. The first-ever UN General Assembly resolution on IEDs in 2015 and the follow up resolution this year have forged international consensus to address this threat since the last CCW Review Conference. We welcome the work conducted in Amended Protocol II of the CCW to increase awareness, exchange information and share best practices on countering the impact of IEDs. We welcome the Political Declaration on IEDs to be adopted at this Review Conference and we support continued work on this issue in the CCW.

The CCW is the relevant forum to explore future developments in the field of weapons technology, including on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWs). We appreciate the work undertaken on this issue in the CCW over the past three years and we support the consensus recommendations of the 2016 Group of Experts to the Fifth Review Conference to establish a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWs in 2017 to further address the multiple aspects of this issue in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. We encourage all States to continue to conduct reviews to ensure that any new weapon, means or methods of warfare comply with International Humanitarian Law or other relevant rules of International Law.

We reiterate 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). We acknowledge that at the same time, it is important to seek a balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations and that MOTAPM 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 on MOTAPM in the CCW are valuable.

The EU remains gravely concerned over the deteriorating situation in Syria which is causing unacceptable suffering for civilian populations. We condemn the alleged use of air-delivered incendiary weapons against civilians or military targets located within a concentration of civilians in Syria. We call on all States not yet party to join Protocol III of the Convention and fully comply with its provisions.

For more than two decades, EU institutions and EU Member States have been at the forefront in supporting mine action. We have contributed more than 600 million euros since 2010 in mine action projects in the most heavily affected countries and regions of the world. We reaffirm our commitment to provide assistance, in particular for the clearance and destruction of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and landmines, assistance to victims, awareness raising, advocacy and research for humanitarian and development purposes.

We encourage further discussions within the CCW on the application of International Humanitarian Law and the challenges presented by the increasingly urban nature of conflicts and its impact on civilians.

Finally, we would like to highlight the valuable contribution of civil society, academia and NGOs to the work of the CCW. They are an important source of support for the strengthening of International Humanitarian Law, they bring further expertise and enhance transparency of our work.

I thank you, Madam President