EU Statement

By

Ms. Judit Körömi
Chair of the EU Working Party for Non-Proliferation (CONOP)

UN General Assembly 71st Session
First Committee Thematic Discussion on Conventional Weapons

United Nations
New York
20 October 2016

- Check against delivery –
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 and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chairman,

1. The EU and its Member States have a long-standing commitment to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The Fifth Review Conference in December 2016 will provide a renewed opportunity to take important decisions for the next review cycle. The universalisation of the CCW and its Protocols, and the full compliance with their provisions, remain among our priorities. The European Union attaches high importance to transparency and building confidence in the implementation of Protocol V. We appreciate all efforts for further progress of this issue during the next review cycle.

2. 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. We welcome the Political Declaration on IEDs with a view to its final endorsement at the Fifth Review Conference. We remain committed to continuing to work in the CCW to address this issue. We also welcome the First Committee resolution on 'Countering the threat posed by IEDs' (which all EU Member States support).

3. The CCW is the relevant forum to discuss 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 the consensual adoption of the recommendations to the Fifth Review Conference of the 2016 Group of Experts. We hope that these will be formally endorsed at the Review Conference and will lead to the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWs in 2017.

4. 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, 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.

5. We are concerned about allegations of recent use of air-delivered incendiary weapons against targets located within a concentration of civilians in Syria.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
Mr. Chairman,

6. We consider the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) a landmark instrument which provides for robust and effective common international standards for the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms, making it more responsible and transparent and reducing the illicit trade of arms and their diversion. We are committed to its universalization, including to exporters, importers and transit states. In addition, the ATT was groundbreaking in reaffirming the concept of Gender Based Violence as a factor to be taken into account when making export assessments.

7. The EU welcomes the successful outcome of the Second Conference of States Parties to the ATT in Geneva in August this year and the adoption of decisions on organisational and procedural issues, in particular regarding the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF), the reporting templates and the establishment of the working groups on transparency and reporting, implementation and universalisation. It is now time to build on this important groundwork to address the substantive issues, notably the challenges of effective implementation and universalisation.

8. The EU is already implementing a dedicated programme to assist16 partner countries across Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Asia to strengthen their arms control systems in line with the requirements of the Treaty. This is done in partnership with civil society, NGOs and regional organisations. The EU intends to continue such support in the years to come. The EU, through a large number of bilateral demarches and the organisation of five regional seminars, is promoting actively the universalisation of the Treaty.

9. The diversion, illicit trade and unauthorised use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) constitute serious impediments for peace, security, growth and development in many parts of the world. The EU reiterates the importance of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on SALW and the International Tracing Instrument which remain essential for further action to tackle illicit SALW. We also support UN Security Council resolutions on SALW and on Women, Peace and Security. The active and equal participation and leadership of women in peace and security decision making is crucial in achieving peace, security and sustainable development.

10. The EU provides considerable assistance through a number of projects to various countries to strengthen the action against accumulation and spread of SALW. The priorities include stockpile management, the destruction of surplus and confiscated SALW, capacity building for marking, record keeping and tracing of SALW and tracking the sources of illicit weapons and ammunition in conflict affected areas. The EU is also assisting countries to enhance their national arms transfer control systems to prevent weapons from falling into unauthorized hands.

11. The European Union welcomes the cross-regional Declaration on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons delivered by France on behalf of a large group of States reiterating the international commitment to deal with the illicit trade in SALW.

12. The EU notes with satisfaction the role and importance of the UN Register on Conventional Arms which marks its 25th anniversary this year. The UN Register
continues to be a great transparency and confidence-building measure in the field of the conventional arms trade and we encourage all States to use this valuable instrument. In this regard, we welcome the recent report by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE).

Mr. Chairman,

13. The European Union fully shares the objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and will continue to support its implementation and universalisation. We reaffirm our aspiration to meet with the goals of the Convention by 2025. We are deeply concerned about allegations of use of anti-personnel mines by States Parties and appeal to all States and non-State actors to refrain from their use.

14. As the world's largest humanitarian donor, the EU will continue to provide assistance, in particular related to the clearance of unexploded ordnance including mines and submunitions, destruction of surplus munitions, assistance to victims and mine risk education in the most heavily affected countries and regions of the world. Where possible, we support the development of synergies as applicable. We wish to highlight the strong linkage with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In the EU a gender based approach, in line with UNSCR 1325, is also part of our humanitarian actions. We believe that women’s equal participation and full involvement in mine action helps ensuring that all relevant diversity aspects are given due consideration, so that affected women, girls, boys and men benefit on an equal basis from mine action activities. The EU welcomes the assumption by Italy of the Chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group for the current biennium.

15. The European Union supports the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and calls upon all actors to fully observe the principles of International Humanitarian Law. We take note of the Dubrovnik Action Plan which identifies key challenges to be addressed by the States Parties of the Convention. We recall that States Parties have agreed by consensus to implement their outstanding obligations as soon as possible, with an aim to implement all before 2030. We take note of the UNGA First Committee Resolution entitled 'Implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions', as a contribution to efforts to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by cluster munitions. We welcome the recent announcement by France, Germany and Italy on the completion of the destruction of their stockpiles well ahead of the set deadline.

16. The EU considers the contribution of civil society, academia, and international organisations a valuable part of our work on conventional weapons issues. They bring further expertise and knowledge from the field and enhance transparency in our work. We also acknowledge the contribution made by industry.

17. The EU and its Member States will continue to contribute actively to the discussions in various disarmament and non-proliferation fora. Several EU Member States have taken up important offices to support progress in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.