EU Statement

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Mr. Chairman,

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, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

We support the aspiration of the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament and look forward to further discussion on how to take this forward. We note that there are many aspects which have synergies with EU priorities, including promoting respect for International Humanitarian Law, strengthening the inter-linkages between security, development and human rights, and integrating a gender perspective in security policy, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The EU advocates an integrated approach, with prevention at its core, targeting root causes of violent conflict, while bearing in mind that illicit, poorly regulated or unregulated flows of arms and ammunition contribute to instability and conflicts, fuel terrorism and organised crime, and have a wide range of humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences. They still cause hundreds of thousands of victims in the 21st century. Moreover, they hamper our joint efforts to achieve peace and security and deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which the EU and its Member States are fully committed.

We welcome the renewed international commitment to counter the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW), as demonstrated by the successful outcome of the Third Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) under the presidency of France, to which EU-funded thematic and regional seminars contributed substantially. We underline that the outcome document welcomes the process established by UN General Assembly Resolution 72/55 on the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles, that it promotes adequate, effective and better coordinated international assistance, that it recognises the importance of PoA implementation for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is a key part in combatting gender-based violence and in the fight against terrorism. We encourage all UN Member States to collect gender-disaggregated data on illicit SALW, in accordance with the Review Conference outcome document.

The EU is currently finalising a review of its 2005 SALW Strategy. The Strategy will cover norm setting, implementation, enforcement and communication by national, regional and global actors. It will include objectives and actions addressing all phases in the life-cycle of small arms and their ammunition: manufacture, export, stockpiling and disposal. Over the past 15 years, the EU has contracted more than EUR 100 million to SALW control projects in third countries, with a focus on support for legislation and regional cooperation, the collection and destruction of illicit and surplus SALW and ammunition, physical security and stockpile management (PSSM), awareness raising and capacity development for marking, record keeping and tracing. In this

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*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*
context, the EU notes with interest the establishment of a dedicated funding facility “Saving Lives Entity” (SALIENT) within the UN Peacebuilding Fund and looks forward to additional details regarding its implementation.

Transfer controls, including on export, import, transshipment, transit and brokering of arms and ammunition are an important tool in the fight against illicit arms flows. The risk of diversion can significantly be reduced by proper arms export control and risk assessment prior to authorising an arms transfer. The EU Outreach Programme on arms exports control and the EU’s efforts to identify and share information on diversion play an important role in this regard.

We call on all UN Member States, in particular major arms exporters, importers and transit countries to join the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We strongly appreciate the ongoing active engagement of civil society, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations, and we believe that States Parties should encourage industry to increase its representation, believing that cooperation with all these stakeholders is important and will further the Treaty's objectives.

The Arms Trade Treaty, together with the UN Programme of Action, the International Tracing Instrument, and the Firearms Protocol, represent a set of complementary international tools to regulate the trade and transfer of conventional arms and ammunition, and to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and diversion, as a contribution to peace, security and stability. They contribute to the achievement of SDG target 16.4 on reducing illicit flows of arms and ammunition and combatting organised crime, and support SDG target 5.2 on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. We recall that all ATT States Parties are obliged to assess the risk of serious gender-based violence or serious violence against women and children before authorising the export of conventional arms.

Within the EU, the 2008 Common Position defines common rules for the control of exports of military technology and equipment by the EU Member States. Every request for an arms export licence for an item listed in the EU Common Military List shall be assessed on a case by case basis against eight risk criteria. These include respect for Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law, the risk of diversion, and internal or regional instability. The EU’s Annual Report on arms exports displays the value of EU Member States' arms exports per weapon category and per destination country as well as refused exports and the reasons for denials, thereby enhancing transparency in arms trade.

Mr. Chairman,

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is a good example of effective multilateralism. It combines a strong global norm with impressive results on the ground with regard to humanitarian protection, stabilisation, development and disarmament. The Convention has resulted in an indiscriminate weapon now being prohibited by 164 States. Tens of thousands of human lives have been saved. Victims' needs are more systematically addressed with a view to ensuring their full, equal and effective participation in society. Land in many regions has been released for habitation, agriculture, tourism and industry. But the work is not done yet. New large-scale contamination by anti-personnel mines, including those of an improvised nature is still reported
in a number of countries. Particularly worrying is the use of such devices in the context of urban warfare, specifically aimed at terrorising civilians and hindering the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. We commend the courageous work of the UN, of national armed forces and mine action operators in addressing this threat.

The EU will continue to support mine action worldwide, addressing new threats but also legacy contamination, aspiring to achieve an anti-personnel mine free world by 2025. The combined funding by the EU Institutions and EU Member States, covering all aspects of mine action, including mine clearance, risk education, stockpile destruction and victim assistance, amounted to more than EUR 600 million in the period of 2012-16. Mine action assistance can only be effective when it meets the specific needs and challenges faced by affected States. Therefore, the EU is currently supporting mine-affected countries to strengthen strategic planning and programming in their national mine clearance and victim assistance policies, in partnership with the UN and the Implementation Support Unit of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

At this 10th anniversary year of the Cluster Munitions Convention, let me recall that the EU supports its humanitarian goal. The EU calls upon all actors to refrain from the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions affecting civilian populations and to fully observe the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We welcome positive developments in the implementation of the Dubrovnik Action Plan, as reported at the 8th Meeting of States Parties in Geneva.

The EU supports efforts to universalise and strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and stresses the importance of compliance with all CCW provisions and annexed Protocols by relevant High Contracting Parties.

We are deeply concerned 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 EU will continue to provide assistance to third countries and looks forward to a strengthened and coherent UN inter-agency coordination on IEDs. We call for more stringent national measures to prevent the supply of weapons and explosive precursors to terrorists, as set out by UN Security Council Resolution 2370. The EU has already taken a number of measures to limit the marketing and use of explosive precursors.

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). We acknowledge 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. The continuation of expert discussions within the CCW would benefit all States.

We recognise the challenges associated with the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas and their impact on civilians and we call on all parties to armed conflict to fully comply with International Humanitarian Law. We appreciate the ongoing efforts to raise awareness and the launching of informal talks within the CCW which aim at ensuring compliance with IHL principles and rules.
The EU welcomes the progress made during the 2018 meetings of the open-ended Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE LAWS), notably the agreed Guiding Principles to reaffirm that international law also applies to autonomous weapons systems and that also future weapons systems need to remain under human control. We emphasise that all States have the responsibility to ensure that their current and emerging weapons systems comply with the requirements of international law, in particular IHL. Human beings must make the decisions with the regard to the use of lethal force, maintain control over lethal weapons systems they use, and remain responsible and accountable for decisions over life and death. We recall that the UN Secretary-General has pointed out to the need to address the fast-paced scientific and technological developments which, in addition to benefits, can entail risks and threats for our collective security. We concur with his view and underline that responsible innovation and Article 36 legal weapons reviews are important. The EU supports the continuation of the GGE’s work in 2019 within the framework of the CCW and we look forward to further substantive recommendations including options for discussions on an outcome document.

We encourage all States to recognise their responsibility in advancing work of the regimes, which includes the fulfilment of financial obligations to the disarmament conventions. We urge all States who have not yet done so to pay their contributions and arrears in full without further delay. The EU looks forward to further cooperation with all stakeholders, including governments, regional and international organisations, civil society, academia and industry, to promote national implementation of relevant international instruments and universal adherence thereto.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman