European Union
Statement by

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

Meeting of the High Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Geneva, 12 November 2015
Mr President,

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

Mr President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as President of our Meeting and by pledging our full cooperation and support in your endeavours.

We have always supported international efforts to address the considerable security, humanitarian and socio-economic impact of conventional weapons and to halt their indiscriminate use. We remain firmly committed to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols, which provide a unique forum to gather diplomatic, legal and military expertise. They also constitute effective means to respond in a flexible way to future developments in the field of weapons technology, and above all, to support the implementation of an essential part of International Humanitarian Law which contributes to preventing and reducing the suffering of civilians and combatants.

For us, universalization of the CCW and its Protocols is an issue of high importance. We urge all States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention and the Protocols in the near future, with a view to achieving the widest possible adherence at an early date and ultimately achieve the goal of universalisation. We welcome the continued efforts by present and past CCW Presidents to that end.

We also stress the importance of compliance with the provisions of the Convention and the annexed Protocols and, in particular, the transparency mechanism established with the annual compliance reports. We encourage States parties, which have not yet done so to submit compliance reports as soon as possible.

We welcome the productive Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons systems (LAWs) in April this year, which continued the discussions initiated by France in 2014. We thank Germany and Ambassador Biontino in particular, for leading the 2015 discussions. The Meetings of Experts over the last two years brought together the most relevant expertise in addressing this complex issue from the legal, ethical, technical and operational perspectives. We value also highly the interaction with civil society and its important contribution in the debate. Important questions though remain and we welcome a continued discussion of this topic in the CCW in order to further increase our common understandings, bearing also in mind the 2016 Review Conference.
With regard to Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM) and the protection of civilians, we would like to reiterate our concern on the humanitarian impact and the heavy consequences on social and economic development caused by the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of these weapons. At the same time, it is important to seek a balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations acknowledging 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 therefore believe that further discussions on MOTAPM in the framework of the CCW could be valuable.

We had constructive discussions on Protocol V and Amended Protocol II earlier this week. We are concerned at the worldwide use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by illegal armed groups, terrorists and other unauthorized recipients and their effects particularly at national level, including on civilian populations. We value highly the discussions taken place in the Group of Experts of Amended Protocol II and the substantive exchange of views on this topic, bearing also in mind the CCW Review Conference next year.

We are looking forward to a constructive and productive annual meeting to take forward our common objectives. Our meetings this week are the last formal Meetings of the High Contracting Parties before the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention in 2016. We are looking forward to the adoption of a robust inter-sessional programme for 2016 to assist States Parties with the preparations for the Fifth Review Conference.

Thank you Mr President