Thank you Mr Chair. Allow me first to congratulate you on your election, and to assure of the full support of my delegation in discharging your duties.

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I will now make some further general remarks in a national capacity.

Mr Chair,

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons is a vital instrument of international humanitarian law. It balances military necessity with humanitarian concerns, and provides a unique forum bringing together military, legal and diplomatic expertise. We urge all States already party to abide by their obligations under the CCW. In particular, we remain concerned by reports of the use of incendiary weapons in contravention of Protocol III and IHL. We also encourage all States not yet party to accede without delay. Having already acceded to Protocols I-IV, and Amended Protocol II, the UK continues to keep its adherence to Protocol V under active review.

The priorities of my delegation for this Meeting are the work of the Group of Government Experts related to emerging technology in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, and issues related to the financial situation of the Convention. We will contribute in more
detail to the discussions under these agenda items. On the first issue, suffice it to say here that we warmly welcome the work of the GGE on LAWS this year in further elaborating the Guiding Principles, and support the recommendation for that work to continue through to the Review Conference in 2021, with sufficient time allocated for it. On the second, we regret that financial and administrative matters still demand our attention, despite the efforts of successive Chairs. The only real solution to the problem is that all participating States pay their dues in full and on time. That said, Mr Chair, we welcome your proposals for additional measures to put the Convention on a more sustainable footing.

In previous years, Mr Chair, this forum has extensively debated the question of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. The UK’s position remains that the use of force in populated areas, as anywhere, is governed by International Humanitarian Law; we remain unconvinced that any further measures are needed to regulate the challenges of the increasing urbanisation of warfare. The UK participated in the Vienna Conference on the Protection of Civilians in Conflict last month, and together with France and Germany has produced a paper setting out key principles for any Political Declaration that may result from these discussions. We look forward to engaging constructively in that process, which should also recognise the challenges posed by the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices and the growing role of non-State actors in causing harm to civilians in conflict.

Thank you, Mr Chair.