



## **EU Statement**

### **21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Amended Protocol II Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Geneva, 12 November 2019**

Mr. President,

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

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Serbia\* and Albania\* as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

I would like to begin by thanking Poland for its leadership in promoting better implementation and universalisation of Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The EU remains fully committed to reducing the suffering and the harm caused by mines, booby-traps and other devices. Amended Protocol II represents an important instrument of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and we invite all States who have not yet done so to join this Protocol. We reiterate our call in particular on those States that remain party only to the original Protocol II to take the necessary measures to accede to the Amended Protocol.

Amended Protocol II is the only IHL instrument which explicitly addresses the use of mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM). Many High Contracting Parties have expressed their continuing concerns on the humanitarian impact caused by the indiscriminate use of these weapons. While acknowledging that MOTAPM are legitimate weapons, Parties are obliged to ensure that they are used in accordance with IHL and that all feasible precautions are taken to protect civilians from the effects of these weapons. We believe it would be appropriate for States Parties to further discuss how to ensure compliance with Amended Protocol II also with respect to MOTAPM. The EU

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\* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

supports adding MOTAPM on the agenda for the CCW Annual Conference and we continue to believe that expert discussions within the CCW on this issue would be of benefit to all.

We are deeply concerned about the continued severe global impact of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and their indiscriminate use and effects in particular in the perpetration of terrorist acts. Efforts to step up clearance are important given the humanitarian impact of IEDs and their overall negative consequences for the security, stability and development of fragile States.

We reiterate our support for the relevant UN General Assembly Resolutions and the 2016 political declaration on IEDs within Amended Protocol II which have helped to build global awareness of the wide-ranging aspects of the IED threat and the importance of a comprehensive approach. We recall the recommendations by the UN Secretary-General in his reports A/71/187 on enhancing prevention, preparedness and response, as well as A/73/156 on countering the threat posed by IEDs. We welcome the ongoing efforts towards a strengthened and coherent UN inter-agency coordination which is essential to ensure a whole-of-system approach, as also highlighted in the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

Furthermore, the EU welcomes the work conducted by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on the development of a voluntary self-assessment tool. Containing a comprehensive overview of key regulations and policies that can help prevent the proliferation of IEDs and their components, this toolkit could assist States in identifying gaps and challenges in their national regulation and preparedness regarding IEDs.

As set out in UN Security Council Resolution 2370 (2017), we call upon all States to adopt and implement more stringent national measures to prevent the supply of weapons and explosives precursors to terrorists. The EU has already undertaken a number of concrete actions in this regard, in accordance with the European Agenda on Security and more specifically in the EU Action Plan against the Illicit Trafficking and Use of Firearms and Explosives.

On 1 August 2019, a new EU Regulation 2019/1148 on explosives precursors entered into force. It will apply from 1 February 2021 onwards. This Regulation includes several measures to strengthen the existing rules. Firstly, it will expand the scope of the earlier Regulation by adding new substances to the list of restricted explosives precursors. Secondly, current registration regimes would discontinue, as registration has proved to be weaker from a security perspective than licensing or a ban for members of the general public. Thirdly, it introduces more comprehensive procedures and criteria for issuing licenses which include verifying the legitimacy of the request, security

screening and a criminal record check. In addition, these measures should facilitate greater awareness raising and information sharing along the supply chain. Lastly, they will make clear that the restrictions also apply to online sales. Online marketplaces will also be obliged to detect and report suspicious transactions. The European Commission is developing practical guidelines to help EU Member States, the chemical industry and online marketplaces to implement the new Regulation.

10. As far as international cooperation and assistance is concerned, the EU will continue to support national capacity building efforts to address the IED threat. The EU is actively involved in particular in Iraq where we support the work of the Iraqi authorities, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and several operators to mitigate the threat posed by IEDs and explosive remnants of war in general. Furthermore, the EU Delegation in Iraq continues to chair a dedicated Explosive Hazards Management donors meeting. In Mali and Somalia, EU Training Missions are contributing to capacity development for IED threat mitigation and explosive ordonnance disposal. Another example is Tunisia, where the EU, together with the European Gendarmerie Force and experts from EU Member States, provided three training cycles in 2017-18 to the Tunisian National Guard, aiming at reinforcing its capacity to face the strong local IED threat. Such support focused on awareness-raising on different types of IEDs as well as on a response to potential IED incidents.

Thank you, Mr. President