



EU Statement
Thematic Discussion on Conventional Weapons
United Nations General Assembly First Committee
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Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Albania* and the Republic of Moldova, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia, Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chair,

While progress is currently challenging on some arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation issues, there are many success stories in the area of conventional arms control and disarmament. We encourage all States to recognise their responsibility in advancing the work of these important instruments. We also believe that the active and equal participation and leadership of women in decision making and action is crucial in achieving peace, security and sustainable development.

Considering the humanitarian imperative of many international conventions tackling the issue of conventional weapons, we cannot ignore Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. This war of aggression is not only a blatant violation of international law but also a humanitarian catastrophe for Ukraine and its people brought about by the Russian Federation in flagrant disrespect for international humanitarian law and human rights law. The EU actively supports the work of the International Criminal Court and measures to ensure accountability for the most serious international crimes including war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide. There can be no impunity for these crimes.

We therefore call on all States to refrain from any arms transfers to Russia. We condemn in the strongest possible terms Russia's use of anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions as well as its use of other explosive weapons, such as rockets and artillery shells or improvised explosive devices (IEDs) directed against civilians in its war of aggression against Ukraine. We call on Russia to respect IHL and to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops

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

and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

The EU recalls that the CCW and its Protocols are an essential and integral part of IHL and reiterates the commitment of the European Union and its Member States to respect and comply fully with IHL, as well as the continuation of implementing fully the EU Guidelines on the promotion of compliance with IHL. The EU strongly encourages all States that have not yet done so to join these important instruments without further delay. The EU underlines that the CCW is a unique international forum gathering diplomatic, legal and military expertise, to respond to new developments in weapons technologies.

The EU welcomes the work over the past years by the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems and acknowledges the substantial contribution it has made to our common understanding of this complex topic and to finding common ground. The EU emphasises that it is important that the GGE continues its efforts, based on a solid mandate, to allow for progress. The EU underlines that the CCW is the relevant international forum in this regard and that we expect it to deliver results. The EU remains committed to pursue its efforts in the GGE with a view to ensuring that the outcome reflects the necessity of compliance with International Law, in particular International Humanitarian Law, taking into account relevant ethical considerations. The EU emphasises that human beings must make the decisions with regard to the use of lethal force, exert control over weapons systems that they use and remain accountable for decisions over the use of force in order to ensure compliance with International Law, in particular International Humanitarian Law.

The EU remains 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 and the use of IEDs by non-state actors. In this context, we welcome the updated political Declaration on IEDs adopted last year by the High Contracting Parties to CCW Amended Protocol II and remain in full support of the relevant United Nations General Assembly Resolutions.

The EU highlights 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). While acknowledging that MOTAPM are legitimate weapons, Parties are obliged to ensure that they are used in accordance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including by taking all feasible precautions, to protect civilians from the effects of these weapons. The EU believes it would be appropriate for States Parties to further discuss how to ensure compliance with Amended Protocol II, also with respect to MOTAPM. The issue of MOTAPM should therefore remain on the CCW agenda for further discussions in order to ensure that High Contracting Parties can continue to consider the matter in a constructive and transparent manner.

The EU also stands united in its support for the universal ban on anti-personnel mines. We consider the Treaty to be a key disarmament instrument, which combines a strong global norm against the use of these weapons with a comprehensive response to end the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons. The EU appeals to all actors to refrain from the production,

stockpiling, trade and transfer of anti-personnel mines and strongly condemns their use anywhere, anytime, and by any actor, whether States or non-State actors. We call on all States that have not yet done so to join the Convention without further delay. We encourage all parties to accelerate progress towards achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines by 2025. We support the Oslo Action Plan and its implementation in all areas. The EU and its Member States have a long history of support for mine action that benefits heavily mine-affected countries and regions of the world.

Mr. Chair,

The EU and its Member States also reaffirm their strong support for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and call on all States, especially the major arms importers, exporters and transit States, to ratify or accede to the Treaty without further delay. We welcome the work done this year under Germany's ATT Presidency and the successful outcome of the Eight Conference of States Parties. The ATT is a key international instrument that aims to establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms and to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion. The assessment requirements in the ATT ensure that all risks outlined in the Treaty provisions, including serious gender-based violence, are properly considered, prior to export of the items covered by the Treaty. Given many blatant breaches by Russia of the Geneva Conventions, we wish to highlight that arms transfers to Russia would not be permitted under the ATT. The EU has an arms embargo in place against Russia, following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014.

As the diversion, illicit trade and unauthorised use of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition continues to constitute a serious impediment for peace, growth, development, and security in the world, the EU has also been actively promoting the implementation of the UN Programme of Action (UN PoA) on SALW since its adoption in 2001. Its implementation must be supported by synergies with other relevant international and regional instruments, such as the ATT and the UNTOC Firearms Protocol. The EU underscores the importance of a gender sensitive approach to SALW-control and highlights the differing impacts of armed violence on women, men, girls, and boys.

Furthermore, ineffective conventional ammunition management continues to be of growing concern to the international community. Therefore, the EU fully supports the Open-Ended Working Group established by UNGA resolution 76/233 that seeks to establish a comprehensive multilayer framework to support the safe, secure and sustainable through-life management of ammunition.

Mr. Chair,

The EU stands firmly behind the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). We are deeply concerned by the impact on civilian populations of the use of cluster munitions, including the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions in Syria, Yemen, Libya and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and in particularly in Ukraine. The EU calls upon all actors to refrain

from such use and to fully comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We acknowledge CCM States Parties' adoption of the Lausanne Action in 2021.

Mr. Chair,

The EU welcomes the conclusion of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.