Mr. President-designate,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, 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 Ukraine and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

First, the EU wishes to convey its deep appreciation for all your efforts in paving the way for a successful and substantive outcome at the Sixth Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, particularly under such challenging circumstances. We pledge our full cooperation and support to achieving an ambitious outcome and a solid plan for future work during the next Review Cycle. This will require common efforts of all High Contracting Parties. In this regard, it is of outmost importance to have the bureau and the Chairs of respective Committees in place in good time before the Meeting. We thank all High Contracting Parties for their early nominations and commitment.

The EU recalls that the CCW, including its constituent Protocols is an important instrument of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and reiterates the commitment of the European Union and its Member States to respect and comply fully with IHL, including through full implementation of the EU Guidelines on the promotion of compliance with IHL.

With 125 High Contracting Parties to the CCW, and only 2 States - Afghanistan and Lebanon ratifying or acceding to the CCW since the Fifth Review Conference, much work remains to be done towards achieving universalisation. The EU urges all States that have not yet done so to join the Convention and its five Protocols. On our part, we will continue to further promote CCW universalization.

The Sixth Review Conference now provides an opportunity to stay responsive to new developments and strengthen the Convention’s implementation. This should include ensuring

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
its financial robustness, an issue that is quite rightly placed at the very heart of the Review Conference. This robustness will also consolidate the institutional structure, namely the implementation support unit.

Mr. President-designate,

The Review Conference provides an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the Convention as well as its Protocols. We hope that appropriate time will be allocated to allow for a structured debate on the most relevant issues, in particular the importance of compliance with the provisions of the Convention and its annexed Protocols, including Protocol III. In this regard, we call on all States not yet party to join Protocol III of the Convention, which prohibits the use of air-delivered incendiary weapons in concentrations of civilians, and we urge all States to fully comply with its provisions.

The EU remains fully committed to reducing the suffering and the harm caused by mines, booby-traps and other devices. The expanding use of IEDs against civilian populations and infrastructure, including health-care systems, produces alarming humanitarian harm, especially in urban settings, and requires an urgent response from the international community. We value the work done on this issue within the framework of Amended Protocol II and we remain committed to continuing work in the CCW to address the issue of IEDs. In this regard, we welcome a proposal to update the 2016 Political Declaration on this issue and we are looking forward to its endorsement at the Sixth Review Conference.

We wish to recall that many High Contracting Parties have expressed continuing concern at the humanitarian impact and the heavy consequences on social and economic development arising from the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM). Whilst 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 that MOTAPM should remain on the CCW agenda for further discussions in order to ensure that High Contracting Parties can continue to consider the issue in a constructive and transparent manner.

Another area, which requires our attention is emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). The EU welcomes the work conducted in the framework of the CCW over the past years and acknowledges the important contribution by the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on LAWS. We would like to see the remaining sessions of GGE in 2021 focused on reaching consensus on recommendations in relation to the clarification, consideration, and development of aspects of the normative and operational framework of LAWS. We call upon all High Contracting Parties to engage constructively ahead of the CCW Review Conference.

Non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control have fundamental gender dimensions and perspectives that must be systematically accounted for. UNSG’s Agenda for Disarmament encourages actions ensuring full and equal participation of women, including in leadership positions, in non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. High Contracting Parties must
effectively reflect on how to further mainstream gender-relevant considerations in UN disarmament work, in line with Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. President-designate,

We are deeply troubled by the Convention’s financial situation. We are convinced that it is absolutely necessary to establish solid financial stability at the Sixth Review Conference in 2021. We welcome your proposals in this regard which aim to guarantee that all High Contracting Parties pay their contributions on time and without delay, thus ensuring the financial stability of the Convention.

Lastly, the EU expresses its support to the administration and implementation of the CCW and its Protocols, in particular the Implementation Support Unit, and encourages the UN to find an agreement with High Contracting Parties to ensure efficient and effective implementation of the Convention. In this respect, the EU is finalising an agreement on EU financial support for the strengthening of the CCW and for assisting the preparations of the Review Conference. This project constitutes a clear political signal by the EU to multilateralism and a rules-based world order, as well as to the importance the European Union attaches to solid implementation and universalisation of the CCW.

We are hopeful that the outcome of this Preparatory Committee will strengthen the Convention and its Protocols, paving the way for a successful Sixth Review Conference in December. You can count on our engagement and support to this end.

Thank you Mr. President-designate