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*, 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 the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

Let me start by congratulating you on assuming the position of President of the Sixth Review Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The EU is pleased to see Ambassador Yann Hwang, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to steer our deliberations and to navigate our efforts to strengthen the implementation of the Convention and to keep it responsive to new developments.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
The EU underlines that the CCW is a unique international forum gathering diplomatic, legal and military expertise, which has previously led to the adoption of restrictions on the use of specific weapons, such as on incendiary weapons. The Convention also offers a flexible way to respond to new developments in weapons technologies and to support the implementation of an essential part of IHL, which contributes to preventing and reducing the suffering of both civilians and combatants.

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 emphasizes the importance of the universalization of the Convention and its Protocols. We strongly encourage all countries that have not yet done so to join them as soon as possible. The EU underlines the importance of transparency and building confidence in the implementation of the CCW and its Protocols and encourages the High Contracting Parties to complete detailed reports on a regular basis.

The EU is fully committed to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control efforts, including by promoting women's meaningful participation in the CCW and other disarmament fora. The EU will continue to support the full implementation of Resolution 1325 and all other relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council aimed at advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The EU welcomes the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) over the past years and acknowledges the substantial contribution it has made to our understanding of this complex topic and to finding common ground. The EU emphasizes that it is important that the GGE continue 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 emphasizes that human beings must make the decisions with regard to the use of lethal force, exert control over lethal weapons system 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.
We regret that the last session of the GGE LAWS did not agree on a substantive report or consensus recommendations in relation to the clarification, consideration and development of aspects of the normative and operational framework on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. This does not do justice to the progress achieved in the discussions of the group in 2021. We would like to thank the GGE Chair, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen for his tremendous work, dedication and diplomatic skills which facilitated the GGE’s substantial discussions on options related emerging technologies in the area of LAWS during its three sessions in 2021 and we welcome the fact that he has provided a summary, capturing his understanding of the work carried out in 2021 in order to inform the work of the Group in 2022. This will be a good basis for the continuation of the GGE’s important work next year.

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. The EU is deeply concerned about the continued severe impact globally of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) attacks and their indiscriminate use and effects, in particular in the perpetration of terrorist acts. The use of improvised explosive devices against civilian populations and infrastructure, including health-care systems, produces alarming humanitarian harm, especially in urban settings, and requires an urgent response. Systematic information exchange on incidents involving IEDs, when feasible, could enhance appropriate defensive measures. Access to precursor material should be restricted through timely disposal of explosive remnants of war, in accordance with the obligation under Protocol V, and through safe management of ammunition stockpiles. Trafficking routes for explosive precursor material should be identified and countered. Decontamination needs to be done in conjunction with the efforts in other disarmament conventions, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, which contains an obligation for States Parties to clear all types of anti-personnel mines, including anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature.

On Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM), the EU highlights the humanitarian impact and the heavy consequences on social and economic development caused by the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of those. While acknowledging that MOTAPM are legitimate weapons, Parties are obliged to ensure that they are used in accordance with IHL. 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 Sixth Review Conference also represents an opportunity to ensure the financial and organisational robustness of the Convention, allowing for a solid and permanent implementation effort. The EU recognizes that the payment of annual contributions by the High Contracting Parties, in full and on time, remains essential to ensure the effective functioning of the Convention and its Protocols, as well as the work of the Implementation Support Unit. The EU calls upon all High contracting parties to meet their financial obligations in a timely manner and calls on all State Parties to pay their mandatory contributions on time and in full.

The EU expresses its support to the administration and implementation of the CCW and its Protocols, and in particular the Implementation Support Unit, and encourages the UN to ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the Convention. In this respect, the EU is pleased to announce EU financial support of 1.6 mil. Euro over 2 years (Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/1694 of 21 September 2021) for the strengthening of the CCW.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you of the EU and its Members States full support for your endeavor and encourage all High Contracting Parties to join our forces and work together in support of the Convention.

I thank you, Mr. President.