Mr Chair,

Please allow me to congratulate you on your election as chair of this Committee and assure you of the United Kingdom delegation’s full support.

Overall, our Convention is working well. The framework Convention and its five Protocols play a vital role in balancing military necessary and humanitarian considerations in conflict. In this statement, my delegation would like to make some observations concerning Amended Protocol II and Protocol III to the Convention.

First, on Amended Protocol II, we welcome the adoption of the revised declaration of Improvised Explosive Devices, and we congratulate Ambassador Ogasawara of Japan, Col. Levant of France and Ms Castillo of Colombia for steering this work to a successful conclusion. Civilians continue to suffer grievously from the increase in deployment of IEDs. Combatting this requires a collaborative approach. We underscore the importance of information sharing and cooperation across relevant forums on best practices in tackling these dangerous weapons, to mitigate the threat they pose.

With regard to mines other than anti-personnel mines, the UK signed the 2006 political declaration, subject to a transition period, and expressed its regret at the failure to agree a legally binding protocol. That transition period has now expired and I can confirm that UK military practice is fully in line with the declaration. We remain ready to consider this issue further. In the meantime, States must ensure that any mines, and the way in which they are put to use, comply with international humanitarian law.
Mr Chair,

Turning to Protocol III, the United Kingdom is deeply concerned by increasing allegations of the use of incendiary weapons, and weapons with incendiary effect, against civilian populations. We must be absolutely clear that whether or not the relevant states are parties to Protocol III, any attacks which target, or which cause indiscriminate or disproportionate damage to, civilians or civilian objects are serious violations of international law. The UK condemns such attacks, and will continue to call for the investigation of allegations by the appropriate national and international bodies. We should all consider how best to ensure that relevant bodies have the mandate to investigate these allegations.

Protocol III plays an important role in the regulation of incendiary weapons. One of the most important challenges we face is to ensure its universalisation. The protocol will not live up to its full potential while states involved in active conflicts are not parties to it. The UK is committed to playing its role in these universalisation efforts.

At the core of the CCW is the recognition of the importance of balancing military necessity and the protection of civilians. Protocol III rightly allows parties to continue to use obscurants and illuminants. But it is imperative that these are used in a way that complies with IHL. These munitions must be deployed with strict care for the environment in which they are used, with an assessment of their likely effect, and of the risks to civilians and civilian objects. Where the risks are too high, as with all munitions, IHL prohibits their use. The UK Armed Forces strictly comply with these rules, and all the principles of IHL. We encourage all states to regularly review their operating procedures to ensure their own compliance.

Thank you Mr Chair.