Mr. Vice-Chair,

I speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

In the context of Articles II, III and IV, the EU supports the ongoing efforts to enhance transparency and building confidence in compliance with the Convention as well as its effective implementation.

We welcome the fact that in 2021 a record number of reports on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) was submitted by States Parties. However, the number of States Parties submitting annual CBM reports is still too low. We strongly encourage all States Parties to submit comprehensive CBMs and to use EU-funded assistance tools such as the CBM guide and the electronic CBM facility to submit their annual CBM reports to the ISU.

We furthermore invite all States Parties to increase sharing information and best practices on national capabilities, activities and actions for implementation, and to consider conducting or participating in peer review initiatives and voluntary visits to relevant facilities and other transparency and confidence-building initiatives. The purpose of such initiatives is not to replace legally-binding verification measures, but to strengthen national implementation and thereby the BTWC.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
At the Ninth Review Conference, the EU will support the proposal by France and its eleven sponsors to establish exchange platform for voluntary transparency exercises.

The EU also supports the proposal to develop voluntary guiding principles, a Code of Conduct, for biological scientists and other relevant personnel. We very much appreciate the efforts made by China and Pakistan in developing their proposal in this regard while we recall the two important principles that the code must be voluntary and it must follow a bottom-up approach, in other words, it must be negotiated with scientists.

Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair.