



European Union
Statement by

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Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

**Meeting of the High Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons**

Geneva, 14 November 2013

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

**EU Statement at the Meeting of the High Contracting Parties
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Mr President,

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[†], Montenegro[†], Iceland[‡], Serbia[†], Albania[†], Bosnia and Herzegovina[†], Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

Mr President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as President of our Meeting and by pledging our full cooperation and support in your endeavors. It gives us great pleasure to see the representative of an EU Member State presiding over our proceedings.

The European Union has always supported international efforts addressing the considerable security, humanitarian, socio-economic impact of any kind of weapons and their indiscriminate use against civilian populations. Promoting effective international multilateralism is a key priority for the EU.

Mr President,

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), that entered into force 30 years ago, is based upon the principle of international law that the right of the parties to an armed conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited, and on the principle that prohibits the use in armed conflicts of weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury, unnecessary suffering or indiscriminate effects. Therefore, with a view to strengthening International Humanitarian Law, the European Union remains firmly committed to the CCW and its Protocols which is a unique forum to gather diplomatic, legal and military expertise as well as to address emerging issues. We believe that these instruments also constitute an effective means to respond in a flexible way to future developments in the field of weapons technology, and above all, represent an essential part of International Humanitarian Law which contributes to both preventing and reducing the suffering of civilians and combatants.

For the EU, universalization of CCW is an issue of high importance and we support the Accelerated Plan of Action on Universalization of the Convention and its Protocols adopted at the Fourth Review Conference in 2011 with the goal of achieving global adherence.

Unfortunately, we note that the rate of adherence still remains low in Africa, South East Asia and part of the Middle East. A lot has been done but further work is still needed. We welcome the accession of Kuwait and Zambia to the Convention and to all its annexed Protocols this year,

[†] The Candidate countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

[‡] Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

bringing this community to 117 members, and we urge those States not yet Party to the CCW Convention to consider ratifying or acceding to it in the near future.

We further note that many States not yet Party to the CCW Convention are affected by mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). Therefore, universalization of the Convention and all its annexed Protocols should remain a priority objective, and we welcome efforts to this end by past and present Presidents.

The EU stresses, once again, the importance of compliance with the provisions of the Convention and its annexed Protocols and, in particular, the transparency mechanism established with the report to be annually sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Notwithstanding this, we note that in the last years only a quarter of all High Contracting Parties sent their reports to UNSG and many others have never fulfilled their commitments since 2007, when the report was for the first time due. In this regard, we believe that what was agreed at the Third Review Conference in 2006 should not be undermined and renewed efforts must be put in order to increase, through effective compliance, further bilateral cooperation and, at the same time, resolve any concerns over national fulfilment of legal obligations that may arise with regard to the interpretation and application of the provisions of the Convention and its Protocols.

Mr President,

The EU welcomes the contribution of the CCW Sponsorship Programme to promote the goals of the Convention and its annexed Protocols, enhance its universalization and assist its effective implementation. In this regard, we also commend the substantive work carried out by the CCW Implementation Support Unit and its efforts to facilitate communications between States Parties and international organizations and fulfill all other tasks as mandated by the States Parties.

We would like to express our deep appreciation for the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining for the efficient administration of the Mine Action Programme, making the best possible use of existing resources, by working closely with national and local authorities to help them in disseminating knowledge, developing standards, and strengthening capacity building in mine-affected countries.

Mr President,

The EU and its Member States highly value the discussion and the substantive exchange of views on Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) during the Informal Open Ended Group of Experts (OEGE) held in April. We are fully aware of the increasing threat posed by the use of IEDs, and the growing political and humanitarian impact caused by IED incidents which mainly affect civilian populations. We believe that this kind of discussion should further continue during the next sessions of the OEGE, promoting inter alia, a common terminology and a framework for understanding the issue of IEDs, in order to strengthen capacity building on a global level.

With regard to Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM) and the protection of civilians, we would like to reiterate our concern on the potential humanitarian impact and the heavy consequences on social and economic development caused by the irresponsible use of those weapons. At the same time, it is also important to strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and military considerations, while acknowledging that MOTAPM can still be used as

legitimate weapons. We therefore believe that further discussions on MOTAPM in the framework of the CCW could be valuable.

The EU and its Member States take note of the emerging debate related to lethal autonomous weapon systems. We recognize that the development of such fully autonomous weapons could raise substantial questions. This debate is a complex one. We need to improve our understanding, bearing in mind that those technologies are still under development. We see value in a common discussion on this matter in the framework of the CCW, which is the best-suited forum gathering the diplomatic, legal and military expertise needed. Such a discussion could aim to explore and provide clarity on the different aspects of the topic. In our perspective, it could help to better understand what we are talking about, what the perspectives are and what is at stake. Therefore, we welcome the idea to convene in 2014 an informal meeting of experts to discuss the questions related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, and share the view that High Contracting Parties should make such a decision during this meeting.

In conclusion, let me stress that we are looking forward to a productive annual meeting to further discuss ongoing and future topics as effective ways to advance our common objectives.

Thank you Mr President

EU Delegation website for more information:
http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un_geneva/index_en.htm