Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. 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, and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

We welcome your non-paper, Chair, and acknowledge your efforts and the efforts of the previous Chairs to improve the financial stability of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Protocols.

The current funding crisis, caused by late and non-payments of assessed contributions to the CCW and several other Geneva-based treaties and conventions, remains a matter of utmost concern for the EU. It has led to the shortening and cancelling of meetings, and suspension of the functioning of the Implementation Support Unit (ISU). It has affected the effective operation of the CCW and its Protocols and hampered further progress. No country has acceded to the Convention since 2017 with the exception of Benin’s accession to certain protocols, and the submission rate of national reports has decreased considerably. This negative trend may be difficult to reverse without a dedicated focal point to

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* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
promote universal adherence and provide assistance and advice to High Contracting Parties for the purpose of national implementation.

We welcome the financial measures adopted under the UK chairmanship in 2017 and call for their full implementation. We remain open to considering further options to improving financial liquidity, as proposed by Latvia in 2018. This could include the possibility for High Contracting Parties to make voluntary contributions to a new voluntary reserve fund, provided that it is set up in a way that does not detract from the legal obligation of the High Contracting Parties to meet their financial obligations in full. A voluntary reserve fund could be used to increase cash flow temporarily, but it must not be used to subsidise non-payments or arrears. In this context, appropriate measures, such as suspending voting rights and office holder positions should be taken to motivate High Contracting Parties to settle their accumulated arrears. We could also look for further efficiencies, where appropriate.

Such measures can, however, only partially remedy the problem caused by structural arrears. The only sustainable solution to improve financial stability is that the High Contracting Parties comply with their financial obligations, as emphasised by you, Mr. Chair. Once again, we urge all States, which have not yet done so, to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time and to settle their outstanding arrears without further delay. The current situation is highly regrettable. It is high time for non-payers to demonstrate their commitment to multilateralism and for others to keep up political pressure and adopt additional measures.

We fully support the joint appeal delivered by France at the UN General Assembly First Committee session on behalf of the Presidents of concerned Conventions and expect the incoming Presidencies to treat this issue as a priority.

The EU and its Member States are concerned by some of the measures taken by the United Nations with respect to the administering of the finances of the Conventions, in particular the withholding of credits. We remain open to further discussing this matter with the Secretariat to find a sustainable solution.

Thank you, Mr. Chair