EU Statement
13th Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Geneva, 11 November 2019

Madam President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Albania*, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank Finland for its leadership in strengthening Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The EU and its Member States are fully committed to the objectives of Protocol V which plays a key role in addressing the problem of unexploded and abandoned ordnance and minimising the serious post-conflict impact of Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs) on civilian populations. We strongly support efforts to strengthen this important instrument of International Humanitarian Law, promote its universalisation and enhance its implementation in order to reduce the humanitarian harm and minimise the risks and effects of ERWs.

We welcome Benin’s accession to Protocol V and at the same time, we note with concern that the level of adherence to this and other CCW protocols remains relatively low. We appreciate the outreach activities you have conducted to promote universal adherence to Protocol V, including the universalisation workshop. We encourage all actors to step up their efforts in this regard, as called for by the 12th Conference, and hope they will result in positive outcomes next year. We call on all States, especially High Contracting Parties to the CCW, to join also Protocol V as soon as possible.

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
The EU has continued to provide significant assistance for mine action, including for clearance and destruction of mines, booby-traps and ERWs, for victim assistance and for mine risk education in the most heavily affected countries and regions of the world. In 2018, the EU institutions contracted mine action support amounting to 95 million EUR, including in Afghanistan, Colombia, Croatia, Guinea, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, The Philippines, Syria and Ukraine.

Explosive ordnance contamination and threat mitigation finds itself at the intersection of different disciplines including security, humanitarian aid, stabilisation, development, public health and the implementation of Treaty obligations. All these disciplines, where relevant and pertinent, should provide support for mine action and integrated support to mine victims. Therefore, we emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach to mine action and stress the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war, not only on access to humanitarian assistance, but also on the achievement of sustainable development, peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts. We welcome the ongoing efforts to enhance donor coordination and to enhance ownership by the affected countries and would welcome further cooperation between relevant international instruments to achieve more sustainable and effective mine action. We also consider that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of all mine action.

The EU and its Member States look forward to working together with all High Contracting Parties to further advance the effective implementation of all provisions of Protocol V. We attach great importance to national reporting to enhance transparency and building confidence on national implementation. National reporting also facilitates international cooperation and assistance, as it increases our understanding of the progress made and the challenges faced in implementing Protocol V. We therefore call on all High Contracting Parties to fulfil their reporting obligations in a timely and effective manner and look forward to the review in 2021 of the support provided for Protocol V national reporting, coinciding with the Sixth CCW Review Conference.

Furthermore, we welcome this year’s expert level discussion which you initiated on urban clearance, as ERWs continue to pose serious risks to health and safety of civilian populations in affected countries. Over the last century, armed conflicts have increasingly been fought in urban areas, which have exposed civilians and the civilian infrastructure to an even greater risk. The
delivery of humanitarian aid is often complicated due to the destruction of roads, rendering them inaccessible and affecting access to basic services.

We also support further sharing of information and experiences between the High Contracting Parties on the implementation of their obligations under Article 4. Information which is released by armed forces accurately, in a timely manner and in a usable format, as required by Article 4, will have a positive impact on clearance, destruction and removal of ERWs on the ground. We encourage further efforts to improve the accuracy and quality of the information. This is a prerequisite for understanding the scale and nature of contamination and designing appropriate responses, especially at a time when we face new types of contamination.

Thank you, Madam President