



EU Statement
24th Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties
to Amended Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions
on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices
Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons
Geneva, 15 November 2022

Mr. President,

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

The Candidate Countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova and the potential candidate countries Bosnia and Herzegovina* and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

I wish to begin by congratulating you on assuming the Presidency of this Annual Conference of Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). At the same time, I would like to commend France and Colombia for their dedicated work as coordinators on matters relating to Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) within the framework of Amended Protocol II. I assure you of the EU's full support and cooperation.

The European Union and its Member States support efforts to universalise and strengthen the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and stress the importance of continued compliance with all CCW provisions and annexed Protocols. In this regard, we encourage all States that have not yet done so to join Amended Protocol II.

Given its direct relevance to the implementation and operation of this Protocol, we must start today's discussion strongly condemning Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. Since the beginning of its aggression, Russia has launched hundreds of attacks targeting civilian areas and infrastructure of multiple Ukrainian cities, leading to hundreds of deaths and injuries. We condemn in the strongest possible terms use of anti-personnel mines by Russian forces in Ukraine causing civilian casualties and suffering, as well as disrupting food and energy production. Furthermore, Russian forces have also laid victim-activated booby-traps in Ukraine. The Russian Federation bears full responsibility for the loss of life, the human suffering and all the destruction it causes in Ukraine.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

By wilfully undermining the rules-based international order and blatantly and repeatedly violating Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, Russia is putting international peace and security at risk. This war of aggression is not only a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter, but also a humanitarian catastrophe for Ukraine and its people brought about by the Russian Federation in flagrant disrespect for international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The EU remains firmly committed to its support to Ukraine and will continue its programmes to helping mine clearance as well as victim assistance and rehabilitation in Ukraine. The EU encourages all States in a position to do so to follow suit and assist Ukraine in its mine clearance efforts in accordance with article 11.3 of AP II as well as the relevant articles of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. The EU and its Member States have a long history of support for mine action that benefits heavily mine-affected countries and regions of the world.

Mr. President,

The EU strongly condemns all use of anti-personnel mines, including of an improvised nature, which violate the norm against anti-personnel mines. The use of anti-personnel mines anywhere, anytime, and by any actor is unacceptable to the European Union. We appeal to all actors to refrain from the production, acquisition, stockpiling, trade, retention or transfer of anti-personnel mines and to halt to the use of anti-personnel mines, whether industrially manufactured, or improvised, worldwide. The burden placed by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war on individuals, families, communities, regions and States remains excessively high.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued severe global impact of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and their indiscriminate use and effects, in particular in the perpetration of terrorist acts. IEDs pose a worldwide threat, affecting over 50 countries and territories, inflict serious physical injuries, damage critical infrastructure, and spread fear and disruption across affected communities. The expanding use of IEDs against civilian populations and infrastructure, including health-care systems, produces alarming humanitarian harm, especially in urban settings, is of increasing concern and requires an urgent response from the international community. Efforts to enhance prevention, preparedness and response are needed to tackle the global threat these weapons cause. Coordination on national, regional and international levels is required. Clearance of anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature needs to be done in conjunction with the efforts in other disarmament conventions, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention where clear synergies exist with APII.

The adoption of the updated political Declaration on Improvised Explosive Devices at the Sixth Review Conference is a welcome step. Its implementation is of key importance as it recognizes, inter alia, that we need concerted effort to address the negative impact of attacks by IEDs on socioeconomic development, infrastructure and freedom of movement and on the security and stability of States to ensure development for all.

We would like to reiterate our continued support for previous multilateral actions taken by the UN in an effort to combat the harmful effects of IEDs. The EU remains in full support of the relevant United Nations General Assembly Resolutions, aided in the creation of universal awareness of the extensive consequences of the threat of IEDs and the ever-growing importance of a comprehensive, global approach to combat said threat. We also recall that the UN Mine Action Service has established a coordinating task force on a whole-of-system approach to IEDs, pursuant to Action 18 of the implementation plan of the 2018 UNSG Agenda for Disarmament. We also welcome the participation of representatives of security, political, humanitarian, development and counter-terrorist entities, which facilitate a common understanding of the threat and improve consistency in the use of relevant terminology.

The EU believes that it is crucial to involve and engage private sector bodies in an effort to limit the flow of precursor materials to unauthorized end users. The EU has already undertaken several concrete actions in this regard, in accordance with the European Agenda on Security and, more specifically, in the EU Action Plan against the Illicit Trafficking and Use of Firearms and Explosives.

The overall purpose of the EU-wide harmonised rules and closer cooperation between EU institutions, EU Member States, and other relevant stakeholders, such as industry and Europol, is to reduce the risk that chemical substances are used for the illicit manufacture of explosives. New EU Regulation 2019/1148 on the marketing and use of explosives precursors, has been in effect since 1 February.

In this regard, the EU is also fully committed to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control work in line with Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, including through promoting women's participation and providing integrated support where appropriate.

In conclusion, we wish to recall once again the humanitarian impact and the heavy consequences on social and economic development caused by the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of Mines Other than Anti-Personnel Mines (MOTAPM). While acknowledging that MOTAPM are legitimate weapons, Parties to the Convention are obliged to ensure that these weapons are used in accordance with IHL and that all feasible precautions are taken to protect civilians from the effects of these weapons. The EU believes that further discussion is needed within the CCW framework on how to ensure greater compliance with Amended Protocol II. We regret that Russia blocked such discussions last year. For this reason, the EU supports the adding of MOTAPM to the agenda for the CCW Annual Conference and continues to believe that further expert discussions on the issue would be of overall benefit to us all.

I thank you, Mr. President.