



**European Union**

**Statement on Conventional Weapons**

**First Committee of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

Mr. Chair,

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

The Candidate Countries North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Albania\*, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina\* and Georgia, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Monaco align themselves with this statement.

The EU reiterates its firm commitment to the humanitarian imperatives that underscore many international conventions aimed at addressing the issue of conventional weapons and remains steadfast in its commitment to the rule of law, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the protection of civilians.

The arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament architecture applicable to conventional arms is under unprecedented strain. After more than three years, Russia's unjustified and illegal full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine continues to inflict a devastating toll primarily on the Ukrainian people, with spill over effects felt in the wider region and across the globe.

**The EU welcomes the agreement on the first phase of the Comprehensive Plan to end the Gaza Conflict put forward by President Trump to secure an immediate ceasefire and the release of all hostages. We note that all sides agree, including the government of Israel. We call on all parties to fully implement the agreement without delay, allowing for the establishment of a lasting ceasefire, the release of the hostages, and the unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza.**

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

Mr. Chair,

The European Union is resolute in its support for and advancing of the humanitarian objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC). The Convention remains a success story of multilateral diplomacy and an important and effective humanitarian disarmament instrument that combines a strong global norm against the use of these weapons with a comprehensive response to end the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons. The EU and its Member States have a long and proud history of support for mine clearance, assistance to victims, and the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines. We have also made substantial contributions to the APMBC in promoting adherence to the Convention's humanitarian principles and objectives, and the ratification of, and accession to the Convention. The EU supports States Parties in their full and effective implementation of the Convention and reiterates its strong support to the States Parties making efforts to complete mine clearance operations, towards achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines.

We are deeply concerned by the ongoing use of anti-personnel mines. In particular, we strongly condemn Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the use of anti-personnel mines that makes Ukraine the most mine-contaminated country in the world. The EU is also deeply concerned about contaminations in countries such as Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, as well as in the Sahel, in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and also Ethiopia. The EU reiterates its full support for mine action across the world and welcomes the ambitious outcome of the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention held in Siem Reap-Angkor, Cambodia in November 2024. The EU will continue its financial support to the Conventions' Implementation Support Unit by allocating 2.7 million EUR for the period 2025-2029. This will contribute to the full implementation of the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan, including its actions related to clearance of mined areas, survey, mine risk education and victim assistance. Since 2023, the EU has contributed over 180 million EUR to humanitarian mine action, including 97 million EUR dedicated to mine clearance, reaffirming its strong commitment to upholding the norm against anti-personnel mines.

We are deeply concerned by the impact on civilian populations of the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions, compounded by their widespread use across many regions. The EU calls upon all actors to refrain from such use and to fully comply with IHL. We reaffirm our steadfast commitment to the humanitarian objectives pursued by the CCM and by other international disarmament instruments: to end the suffering caused by the devastating impacts of explosive

remnants of war, including cluster munitions, protect civilians, and advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

The EU recalls that the CCW and its Protocols are an integral part of International Humanitarian Law. The EU and its Member States are fully committed in their respect for, and compliance with, IHL. We strongly encourage all States that have not yet done so to join the CCW and its Protocols without further delay. The EU and its Member States continue to fully implement the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with IHL.

We encourage continued international dialogue and cooperation to address the opportunities and challenges presented by AI in the military domain, and support efforts to exchange best practices and foster a common understanding of the existing legal obligations and ethical implications. The EU especially welcomes the work by the Group of Governmental Experts on emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS). We acknowledge its substantial contribution to advancing shared understandings of this complex topic and its progress in considerations on a set of elements of an instrument, without prejudging its nature, to address emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. It is essential that High Contracting Parties, including major military powers, engage constructively in these continued discussions and efforts. The EU emphasises that context-appropriate human judgment and control must be retained over LAWS and that human beings remain accountable for decisions over the use of force in order to ensure compliance with international law, in particular IHL. The two-tier approach offers a path as regards lethal autonomous weapons systems, for their possible prohibition and regulation, ensuring compliance with international law, in particular IHL, and taking into account relevant ethical considerations. The EU underlines that the CCW is the relevant international forum in this regard, and we expect it to deliver concrete results by the end of 2026, not least given ongoing rapid developments in this area. The EU further notes the informal consultation on LAWS pursuant to Resolution 79/62 which took place in New York in May.

In line with its 2018 Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition, the EU remains fully committed to preventing and curbing the illicit trade in SALW and their ammunition worldwide, also through support for the implementation of the Global Framework on Through-Life Conventional Ammunition Management (GFA). We welcome the preparatory meeting held in June this year and look forward to the first Meeting of States of the GFA in 2027. The EU expresses full commitment to the

implementation of Action Plans until 2030 adopted by the Review Conference on the UN Program of Action on SALW. The Open-Ended Technical Working Group established by the Conference is a timely initiative to address new developments in manufacturing, technology and design of SALW and we look forward to its first meeting in 2026.

Mr. Chair,

The EU remains deeply concerned about the continued global impact of Improvised Explosive Devices and their indiscriminate use and effects, particularly in the perpetration of terrorist acts, and use by non-state actors. The EU also highlights the humanitarian impact and the severe 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 CCW are obliged to ensure that they are used in accordance with IHL, including by taking all feasible precautions to protect civilians from the effects of these weapons. We recall the important adoption of the Ireland-led Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA), and its aim to reduce harm and strengthen the protection of civilians. We look forward to the Costa Rica conference in November to translate the Declaration into concrete measures on the ground.

The EU and its Member States reaffirm their strong support for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which establishes the highest possible common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms and preventing and eradicating their illicit transfer and diversion. We call on all States to ratify or accede to the Treaty without further delay, and on all Parties to comply with their obligations, including in reporting, which should be transparent. We call on all States Parties to refrain from any transfers to Russia, including parts and components, as well as ammunition, in line with Article 6 para 3 of the ATT. The EU maintains an arms embargo against Russia, following its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. On the contrary, military assistance to Ukraine, including transfers of conventional weapons from some EU Member States and other States, is a legitimate means to support Ukraine in exercising its inherent right to self-defence under the UN Charter against the aggression of Russia.

The EU recognises the UNROCA as an instrument to support transparency, build trust and promote dialogue in military matters. The Register should remain a central tool for United Nations efforts to promote and facilitate confidence-building among Member States and thereby to enhance international peace and security, thus enabling sustainable development. The EU encourages all States to report to UNROCA in a timely, complete and transparent manner.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.