



European Union
Opening Statement
Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 24 January 2023

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Albania*, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina* and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

We congratulate Egypt on assuming the first Presidency of the 2023 session of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you and the other P6 members – Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany and Hungary – every success in your endeavours. The challenging international context and high tensions makes it more important than ever for the Conference to move forward in fulfilling its mandate. We always start a new year's session with expectations to break the stalemate and advance the work of the Conference.

Mr. President,

Eleven months ago, Russia has brought war back in Europe, a total war against Ukraine. The EU reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and reaffirms the Union's full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, as well as for Ukraine's inherent right of self-defence against the illegal and brutal Russian aggression. Russia's ongoing campaign of systematic missile, drone, rocket and artillery strikes against Ukrainian civilians, civilian targets, energy infrastructure and other utilities, to inflict even more suffering on the Ukrainian people, is a crime for which there can be no impunity. It must stop immediately.

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

The EU welcomes and encourages further efforts to ensure full accountability for war crimes and other crimes in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including ways to secure accountability for the crime of aggression.

In the same vein, the EU reiterates its strong condemnation of any type of Iran's military support, including deliveries of drones, to Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. The EU recalls that any transfer of certain combat drones and missiles to or from Iran without prior permission by the UN Security Council is in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The EU adopted two sets of restrictive measures, on 20 October and 12 December 2022, to target those responsible for the production and delivery of Iranian drones to Russia for being used in Ukraine. Such EU sanctions on Iran are separate from the existing EU commitments under the JCPOA. The European Union strongly cautioned Iran against any new deliveries of weapons to Russia, in particular any steps towards possible transfers of short-range ballistic missiles to Russia, which would constitute a serious escalation. The European Union will continue to respond to all actions supporting the Russian aggression against Ukraine and hold Iran accountable including through additional restrictive measures. In addition, as part of the ninth package of sanctions against Russia, the Council adopted on 16 December, restrictions on the direct exports of drone engines to Russia and the export to any third countries, such as Iran, where there is a suspicion that they will be used in Russia.

Mr. President,

Russia's continued war of aggression against Ukraine with Belarus' complicity has devastating consequences for international peace and security, as well as global disarmament efforts. Russia is not only ruining endeavours to advance global norms, its behaviour hampers both multilateral and bilateral cooperation and work in this field, including the core items that we should be discussing in this Conference.

The EU regrets that it has not been possible to achieve consensus on a final outcome document of the 10th Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in August because of Russia. In this way, Russia, which is repeatedly violating international law thus showed again its total disregard for the rules-based international order. Nevertheless, the legally binding obligations enshrined in the NPT and commitments from the past Review Conferences remain valid.

The NPT is a historic success and the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, and its full implementation is crucial. The EU strongly supports all three pillars of the NPT and it will continue to promote comprehensive, balanced and substantive full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan. We stress the need to implement all obligations under the NPT, and commitments during previous Review Conferences, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of Article VI, with the ultimate goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. We are resolved to seek a safer and more secure world for all in accordance with the goals of the Treaty in a way that promotes international stability, peace and security. The EU stresses the importance of

universalising the NPT and calls on all States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States and, pending their accession, to adhere to its terms.

The next review cycle will offer yet another urgent opportunity to achieve concrete progress towards the full implementation of the NPT. Such progress is needed to strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the NPT and an important element in the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes in accordance with Article IV of the NPT.

The reduction of deployed strategic nuclear arsenals under the New START Treaty contributes to the implementation of Article VI of the NPT through the overall reduction in the global stockpile of deployed nuclear weapons. Recalling the obligations for all nuclear weapon States arising from Art. VI of the NPT, we underline that the two nuclear weapon States with the largest arsenals hold a special responsibility in the area of nuclear disarmament and arms control. The EU strongly encourages seeking further reductions to their arsenals including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons and to pursue further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, risk reduction, verification activities, laying the ground for even more robust and ambitious future arms control agreements and reporting. We call on China to actively contribute to these processes.

Furthermore, Russia, a nuclear weapon State, has violated the security guarantees of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which Ukraine received after renouncing the nuclear weapons on its territory in the wake of the USSR collapse and joining the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon State.

Months before and ever since its brutal invasion, Russia has repeatedly used reckless, aggressive rhetoric regarding the use of nuclear weapons. It repeatedly made veiled nuclear threats and proliferated manipulative and baseless narratives about Ukraine's alleged possession of or intention to deploy a 'dirty bomb'. Such practices can only foster a climate of insecurity, are contrary to the spirit and principles of the NPT and must cease. We will continue to counter Russia's attempts of information manipulation, as well as address their consequences, in order to increase resilience against such disinformation campaigns by Russia and pro-Kremlin outlets. Through its reckless acts against nuclear safety and security in Ukraine, Russia has added to the gravity of the threats and challenges facing Ukraine and the international community. The resolutions of the IAEA Board of Governors, adopted so far, were very clear on that. We call on Russia to abide by the January 2022 leaders' declaration and by all its international obligations.

Lastly, the Conference on Disarmament was unable to reach agreement on a substantive report last year. This was due to Russia's blockage in an attempt to prevent broad condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and acknowledgement of the security challenges caused by such war. By severely abusing the rule of consensus, Russia obstructed any faithful reflection on the negative impact that its war of aggression against Ukraine had on the work of this Conference.

Mr. President,

Although, we remain concerned that the Conference on Disarmament (CD) continues to be deadlocked, we aim to reinvigorate substantive work in the CD towards concrete negotiations, which have not been possible in this forum for much too long. The successful result of the 9th Review Conference of BTWC proves that it is possible if there is a will. It reaffirms that multilateralism matters and that dialogue and cooperation are key components to pave the way for strengthening the important global norms in the 21st century. The BTWC Review Conference's outcome – that the UN Secretary General considered “a glimmer of hope in an overall bleak international security environment” – was one of few positive achievements in 2022. Another one was the conclusion of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. Drawing inspiration from these examples, the EU calls on CD members to show political leadership to break the long lasting deadlock. The CD should fulfil its mandate to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties and it could also elaborate other instruments and norms, such as guidelines and codes of conduct. We are confident that despite the known challenges, we must advance technical, substantive work and broaden areas of agreement so that we are better prepared to start negotiations as soon as they are possible. As a first step, we should take a fresh look at the organization of our work with due respect to the rules of procedure. The concept of a balanced and comprehensive Programme of Work should not act as a barrier to beginning substantive work on core items on the CD's agenda.

While the EU and its Member States are ready to launch substantive work on all core items, our longstanding priority in the CD is to immediately commence negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices (FMCT) and we support starting such negotiations in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We call on all States to contribute to facilitating the long-overdue negotiations on a FMCT. In the meantime, we call on all States possessing nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Promoting universal adherence to and the entry into force of the CTBT is a top priority for the EU. We call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in Annex II, to sign and ratify the CTBT without preconditions or further delay.

Moreover, the EU supports the enlargement of the CD, which currently comprises only 65 members. We think that the expansion of the membership of the CD should be treated urgently and be a subject of substantive consultations, laying out concrete scenarios for the consideration of CD members. One of the way forward would be to appoint a special coordinator on this issue, which the EU fully supports.

Gender equality and the full empowerment of all women and girls are important cross-cutting priorities for the EU. We welcome efforts to promote gender equality and improve women's full, active, equal, and meaningful participation, including in leadership positions in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control fora. The EU supports the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We should also engage youth and explore further

opportunities to discuss with civil society, academia, industry and research institutions within the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. President,

The EU remains deeply committed to verifiable treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament. We call on all parties to avoid steps that could erode the existing international instruments and to faithfully comply with their obligations.

The EU strongly condemns the large number of illegal missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The DPRK's repeated violation of UN Security Council resolutions, poses a grave threat to all nations and undermines international and regional peace and security.

The DPRK recent statements that it intends to continue nuclear and missile development is deplorable. The EU stresses yet again that the illegal actions taken by the DPRK cannot and will never confer upon it the status of a nuclear-weapon State in accordance with the NPT or any other special status in this regard. The EU further condemns the renewed activities in several nuclear sites in the DPRK, and the intention to prepare another nuclear test. The EU urges the DPRK to return immediately to full compliance with the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We urge the DPRK to engage in meaningful discussions with all relevant parties to build a basis for sustainable peace and security and to take steps aimed at pursuing complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The EU stands ready to support meaningful diplomatic processes.

The European Union reiterates its clear determination that Iran must never develop or acquire a nuclear weapon, and recalls Iran's commitments in that respect and its international obligations. The EU expresses its grave concern at Iran's continued actions inconsistent with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in particular with regard to the expansion of its nuclear enrichment capacity and production of highly enriched uranium. Iran's actions, which have no credible civilian justification, carry very significant proliferation-related risks. The European Union strongly urges Iran to reverse its alarming nuclear trajectory, to return to its political commitments in the field of nuclear non-proliferation without further delay, and to resume all JCPOA-related monitoring and verification measures, including its Additional Protocol. Diplomacy is still the best option for preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. This is also instrumental to the security of the whole region and remains in our fundamental common interest.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to, and continued support for, the full and effective implementation of a restored JCPOA. However, the risk of a nuclear non-proliferation crisis in the region has increased as a result of Iran's nuclear trajectory. In this context, the European Union regrets that, despite political support by the EU member States and intense international diplomatic efforts to restore the full implementation of the JCPOA including negotiations in Vienna facilitated by the EU High Representative as Coordinator of the JCPOA Joint Commission, Iran has not made the necessary decisions and not taken the necessary steps, continues to escalate its nuclear programme and makes it increasingly difficult to reach a deal.

It calls on all countries to support the implementation of Resolution 2231. The EU also underscores that the JCPOA is separate from Iran's legally binding obligations under the Non-proliferation Treaty, which are essential to the global non-proliferation regime. We call for full cooperation with the IAEA, which remains absolutely crucial. It is in this regard that the European Union recalls the resolutions adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors on 8 June and 17 November 2022 and calls upon Iran to urgently fulfil its legal obligations, including under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), by providing technically credible explanations and grant necessary access. The EU also calls on Iran, which conditioned a deal on the restoration of the JCPOA on the settlement of the 'outstanding safeguards issues', to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. President,

The EU and its Member States continue to support effective multilateralism and rules-based international cooperation, with the UN at its core, in order to ensure a safer, more stable and sustainable world. This is the only way to address global challenges and deliver results on issues important to our citizens. The EU will continue to do its utmost to protect the integrity of the rules-based international system, which is key to our collective security and the cornerstone of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

I thank you, Mr. President.