



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Statement of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
delivered by H.E. Robert in den Bosch, Permanent Representative
to the Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 26 January 2023

Mr. President,

Allow me to start by congratulating you on the assumption of the Presidency. We also wish the other P6 members – Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany and Hungary – every success in their coming endeavours. I would also want to extend a warm welcome to the new colleagues that have recently arrived in Geneva, and I look forward to a fruitful collaboration with them. In addition to the statement delivered by Sweden on behalf of the European Union, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

As we all know, the CD does not operate in a vacuum and developments outside the Conference have a bearing on what happens here. There are several concerning developments in the international security environment that deserve our attention, including the war raging on the European continent.

Russia's illegal war on Ukraine grossly violates Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and the rights of its citizens. We are horrified by the testimonies and reports of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence and rape, perpetrated against women and girls in Ukraine as well as elsewhere in conflict and post-conflict situations worldwide. All States have the responsibility to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for violence against women and girls in conflicts-related situations.

This war also has far-reaching consequences and poses a serious threat not only to Ukraine's civilian population, but also to global security and the Rules Based International Order. It raises serious questions to which answers must

be found: What does this mean for the European and global security architecture? How does it affect multilateralism, and the CD specifically? How do we ensure Strategic Stability and what is the impact more in general on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation?

Mr. President,

There is an urgent need for the CD to make progress. For more than 20 years the CD has not delivered on its mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum for the international community.

Over the years the programme of work has been linked with the establishment of subsidiary bodies. Most of the time this resulted in a stalemate, because no consensus could be reached on the establishment of the subsidiary bodies and their respective mandates. As a result of this, the programme of work became more and more a goal in itself instead of being a mere planning tool. In our 2019 working paper “back to basics – the Programme of Work” we have made some practical suggestions to ensure the CD can focus again on the substance of its work during the plenary meetings with the aim to launch negotiations in a subsidiary body subsequently.

Having said this, there is more room for improvement, and certainly after last year’s CD when we could not agree on a substantive report to the UN General Assembly. We therefore welcome the intention as expressed by my French and German colleagues to discuss the possibilities for revitalizing the CD during their respective presidencies later this year.

One of the issues we would like to see addressed is how to deal with the consensus rule. In at least one international organisation consensus is defined

as the absence of dissent, but over the years in the CD it has developed into the need to reach unanimity and ended up to being a de-facto right of veto on virtually everything for everyone.

Mr. President, having said this, I would like to come back to your opening remarks on Tuesday and express my delegation's support for your proposal, to hold thematic debates on the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones and negative security assurances for non-nuclear weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, I would like to welcome the proposals of the incoming French and German presidencies to make the commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices a key priority.

In a similar vein, developments in Outer Space continue to be a cause for concern. The Netherlands is keen to focus on reducing the vulnerability of space. We support a step-by-step approach to further develop the normative framework which could lead to further legally binding measures. The Open-Ended Working Group provides an excellent opportunity to make such progress. In fact, within one year after its coming into being this OEWG has proven itself to be an indispensable platform for an inclusive dialogue with all relevant stakeholders on the reduction of space threats. The GGE on Further Practical Measures for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space may serve as another step towards this goal, but we should remain vigilant that responsible behaviour by space actors remains the guiding principle to ensure a safe, secure, and sustainable Outer Space for us all. In our view these three hallmarks do not contradict each other. On the contrary, there is a rather

useful overlap, as we have seen during the recently held joint 1st/4th Committee joint panel discussion on Outer Space in New York

Mr. President,

Although we did not reach consensus on an outcome document during the 10th NPT Review Conference – due to the blockade by one State Party – the other 190 states parties were willing to compromise in order to strengthen the NPT-architecture, and multilateralism in general.

During the 11th Review Cycle of the NPT, we should build on the draft final document from the 10th Review Conference. Although it is not the extensive document some might have hoped, it contains many steps forward, including on risk reduction and peaceful uses. It goes without saying that it is our collective responsibility to also take stock of and address the current challenges, for instance on the implementation of Article VI

In the context of the NPT, nuclear disarmament verification, risk reduction, crisis stability and crisis management are major points of attention for the Netherlands. We will continue to advocate for measures aimed at nuclear risk reduction, such as communication channels, transparency, dialogue about doctrines and increasing decision time in crisis situations. Concrete measures on these issues can provide a basis for tangible steps in the future.

In this context, Iran must change its course on the JCPOA and return to the negotiating table. A diplomatic agreement is in the best interest of the international community and also of Iran. Therefore, Iran must stop escalating steps and return its nuclear program under full supervision of the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In the same spirit, we call upon Iran to cooperate with the IAEA on the outstanding safeguards questions.

Let me also seize this opportunity to strongly condemn Iran's military support to Russia in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 as well as the use of Iranian supplied drones by Russia against civilian installations in Ukraine.

Mr. President,

The Netherlands is a firm proponent of a prosperous, peaceful, and secure Korean Peninsula that is free of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, we remain concerned about the DPRK's increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, which violate various UN Security Council Resolutions. Moreover, the Netherlands underscores the importance of dialogue among regional parties to reduce tensions and risks.

Mr. President,

The Netherlands will continue to integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of its foreign and security policy. We are committed to the full, effective, and accelerated implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. We will promote initiatives to address structural barriers that hinder the full, equal, and meaningful participation and leadership in decision-making of women in all their diversity. We look forward to the thematic debate on gender equality, under the Finnish presidency later this year.

In closing, Mr. President, allow me to ensure you of the full support of my delegation for your efforts to restore the central position of the CD within the international disarmament machinery.

Thank you for giving me the floor.