



European Union
Opening Statement
Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 21 January 2025

Mr. President,

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

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova¹ and Georgia as well as the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

We congratulate Italy on assuming the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you every success. Italy and all P6 Presidencies will have the EU's full support.

Upholding the rules-based international order founded on the UN Charter remains a key priority for the EU, not least as the international community confronts a global security landscape marked by heightened tensions and complex geopolitical challenges. The EU and its Member States remain deeply concerned that the Conference on Disarmament (CD), as a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community and a cornerstone of the UN disarmament machinery, has been deadlocked for so long. Its continued relevance and effective functioning to deliver and make progress on disarmament issues is of utmost importance for the EU. Failing to adopt and implement a programme of work, and not having fulfilled the negotiation mandate of the Conference on Disarmament for thirty years is untenable and stands in stark contrast to the significant security challenges and threats we face today. Strong political will and flexibility are required from all CD members if we are to break the deadlock and bring the CD back on track. Given the known challenges, technical, substantive work and broadening areas of agreement need to happen for any negotiations. We are committed to resume the work of the Conference by reconfirming its decision CD/2390 adopted on 13 June 2024 and to advancing its mandate, with a view to bringing the CD back to its intended purpose and functioning in due course.

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

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

(FMCT) and we support starting such negotiations in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We urgently call on all States to contribute to facilitating the long-overdue negotiations on a FMCT. The FMCT complements other disarmament measures, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and strategic arms reduction agreements. We expect that the relevant Subsidiary Body will further advance this work, building on the work of the Group of Governmental Experts and the High Level Expert Preparatory Group. Pending a future FMCT in force, the EU calls on China and all other States concerned to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices in order to contribute to our collective efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

The EU supports the long overdue enlargement of the CD to reflect the realities of today's global landscape and enable broader participation as a matter of urgency. We call for the urgent appointment of a special coordinator who could lead substantive consultations on the expansion of membership and lay out concrete scenarios for the consideration of CD members. It is unacceptable that 17 observer requests, including 16 EU Member States and Candidate Countries, were blocked in the 2024 session from participating in the work of the CD. It represents a blatant disregard for the principle of inclusivity and undermines the authority of the CD as a single disarmament negotiation body. We call on all CD Member States to avoid political obstructions and to allow interested observer States to participate in the work of the Conference.

Mr. President,

The EU remains committed to the universalisation and full implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI and an important element in the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. We stress the need to implement all obligations under the NPT, and commitments from previous Review Conferences, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of Article VI, with the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Promoting universal adherence to and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a key priority for the EU. The EU deeply deplores Russia's decision to revoke its ratification of the CTBT. The EU calls on Russia to continue to respect the object and purpose of the Treaty. Furthermore, we call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in Annex 2, to sign and ratify the CTBT without preconditions or further delay.

The EU and its Member States recognise outer space as a global commons, to be used for the benefit for all humankind. We are actively engaged in promoting the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable outer space environment and the peaceful use of outer space on an equitable and mutually acceptable basis for all States, for present and future generations, in line with applicable international law with the Outer Space Treaty at the core of these efforts. It is now urgent and in the interest of all States to pragmatically and immediately improve space security and to act swiftly in order to agree on a global, common and multilateral solution

through greater coordination and cooperation, with the involvement of all UN Member States and relevant organisations. We will promote the development and implementation of norms of responsible space behaviour, which is the most pragmatic and immediate way forward to make progress on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) in all its aspects and improve space security. We will build on the work advanced in the Open Ended Working Group on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours (OEWG).

The EU recognises that negative security assurances strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and calls on all nuclear weapon States that have not done so yet to reaffirm existing security assurances noted by relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The EU acknowledges the critical importance of existing nuclear weapons free zones for peace and security and remains committed to the implementation of the Resolution on Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

Mr. President,

Today, almost three years since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, we reiterate our resolute condemnation of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a blatant violation of the UN Charter, and reaffirm our continued support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and its inherent right of self-defence. Moreover, we strongly condemn Russia's deliberate campaign of destruction against Ukraine's energy and other civilian infrastructure which aims to worsen hardship amid the onset of winter. The arms transfers, including of ballistic missiles, and deepening military cooperation between Russia, the DPRK and Iran respectively, as well as the deployment of the DPRK's military forces to Russia and their use on the battlefield against Ukraine represent an international escalation of the war, with serious consequences for international peace and security. The EU urges all countries to immediately cease providing material support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. This includes not only direct military support but also the provision of dual-use goods and sensitive items that sustain Russia's military industrial base. We reaffirm our support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, in line with the key principles and objectives of Ukraine's Peace Formula. We underline the principle that no initiative about Ukraine be taken without Ukraine.

The EU welcomes the ceasefire agreement of 27 November 2024 between Israel and Lebanon, following the mediation efforts undertaken in particular by France and the United States. It urges the parties to implement the ceasefire as agreed, and calls for the full and symmetrical implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Following the fall of Assad's criminal regime in Syria, the EU stresses the historic opportunity to reunite and rebuild Syria, and underlines the importance of an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in line with the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Syria's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within secure borders should be fully respected, in accordance with international law. The EU underlines the importance of the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria, under the control of the OPCW. In addition, the new authorities must secure

all relevant archives, witnesses and related material in order to have a complete picture of the former regime's chemical weapons programme. To achieve these objectives, the EU supports the OPCW to visit and secure facilities and materials as soon as it is safe to do so.

The EU warmly welcomes the ceasefire agreement in Gaza, which will allow the phased release of the hostages - ending their terrible ordeal that has lasted for more than 15 months – end hostilities and ease the humanitarian suffering in Gaza. We extend our gratitude to the US, Egypt and Qatar for their efforts in negotiating the ceasefire, which we had consistently called for. This is a significant achievement, which should have positive repercussions across the Middle East. The EU is committed to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace based on the two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We will contribute to this objective through support to the Palestinian Authority to help it address its most pressing needs and support the reform agenda, and engagement with Israel and international partners in order to revive the political process.

The EU strongly condemns the DPRK's repeated launches of ballistic missiles. The DPRK must cease these illegal and dangerous launches, which continued unabated throughout the last two years. They blatantly violate UN Security Council resolutions and undermine regional and international peace and security. The EU reiterates that the DPRK cannot and will never have the status of a nuclear weapon State in accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), or any other special status in this regard. The EU urges the DPRK to return immediately to full compliance with the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, bring into force the Additional Protocol and sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The DPRK must abandon all its nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missile programmes and existing nuclear programmes, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and cease all related activities. The EU is ready to work with all partners in promoting a meaningful diplomatic process aimed at building sustainable peace and security through the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. President,

The Pact for the Future provides a unique opportunity to reinvigorate multilateralism, make it fit to tackle current and future global challenges, and reduce the trust gap towards institutions at all levels and among UN members. While the EU is more ambitious regarding some of its features, including disarmament, we look forward to engaging constructively, working with partners from all regions, including civil society actors, for a meaningful and ambitious implementation of the Pact for the Future.

Inclusivity and gender equality are essential for effective disarmament. Gender equality and the full empowerment of women and girls is a key, cross-cutting priority for the EU. We welcome and support efforts to promote gender equality and ensure women's full, active, equal, and meaningful participation in all matters of peace and security, as set out in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, including in leadership positions in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control fora. The EU will engage further to transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security as put forward by the UN Secretary-General in action 5 of his recommendations under the "New Agenda for Peace" and underlined by the UN General

Assembly in resolution 79/57 (2024) on “Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control”.

In all disarmament fora, including the Conference on Disarmament, we encourage increased engagement with youth, ensuring their meaningful participation, as well as active engagement and input from civil society, academia, industry, research institutions, and affected communities and welcome further relevant initiatives in this regard.

I thank you, Mr. President.