



European Union
Opening Statement
Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 20 January 2026

Madam President,

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

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro¹, Ukraine, and Republic of Moldova, the EFTA countries Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Ambassador Davaasuren Gerelmaa, on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to assure you of the European Union's full support. We also thank your predecessors for their efforts in steering the work of this Conference under particularly challenging international circumstances.

Madam President,

We open the 2026 session of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) at a defining moment for international peace and security marked by profound challenges to global security. An increasingly complex and strained international security environment, geopolitical rivalry, technological disruption and the erosion of trust among States are directly weakening the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture developed through decades of sustained effort. The international rules-based order, grounded in the United Nations Charter and international law, is under strain including by Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, the proliferation crises in Iran and DPRK as well as a result of ongoing conflicts and crisis in other parts of the world. Upholding it remains a key priority for the EU.

Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, in clear violation of the United Nations Charter and international law, continues to have far-reaching consequences for international peace and security. Its impact extends well beyond the battlefield, exacerbating global insecurity, and undermining arms control and disarmament arrangements. The EU reaffirms its continued and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The EU welcomes the ongoing diplomatic efforts to put an end to the war and urges Russia to agree to a full, unconditional

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

and immediate ceasefire, to which Ukraine continues to be committed, and to engage in meaningful negotiations towards a just and lasting peace. The path to peace in Ukraine cannot be decided without Ukraine. The EU and its Member States are ready to contribute to robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine, notably through the Coalition of the Willing and in cooperation with the United States. This will include supporting Ukraine's ability to deter aggression and defend itself effectively.

Madam President,

The EU reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and to the centrality of multilateralism in addressing shared security threats. We are therefore very concerned that the Conference on Disarmament continues to be deadlocked. The EU's central aim in this forum remains the same: to work towards concrete negotiations so as to break its stalemate. 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.

The EU is steadfast in its support for a balanced, progressive and action-oriented agenda at the CD and call on all members to demonstrate political courage, flexibility and a renewed sense of responsibility. An agreement on a Programme of Work is not an end in itself; it is the minimum condition for restoring the credibility of this Conference and enabling it to contribute meaningfully to global security.

The adoption of the UN General Assembly First Committee resolution on the Report of the Conference on Disarmament by vote once again underscores the urgency of restoring the CD's credibility and effectiveness.

Our longstanding priority is to immediately commence negotiations of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). In the Conference on Disarmament, we support any such negotiations in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We urgently call on all States to contribute to facilitating this long-overdue process. Pending the entry into force of such an FMCT, the EU calls on China and any other States concerned to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The EU recognises the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in receiving unequivocal security assurances from nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Negative Security Assurances are important components of binding and agreed security arrangements, strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, contributing to confidence-building and nuclear disarmament, and enhancing regional and global security. In this context, the EU reiterates its strong call on Russia to cease violating its commitments under the Budapest Memorandum. The EU is ready to engage in discussions about future negotiations on Negative Security Assurances in the context of a balanced program of work. 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.

The EU also wishes to underscore the importance of inclusivity. Observers, including States not members of the CD, international organisations and civil society, bring perspectives, expertise and regional insights that enrich our discussions and strengthen the legitimacy of our work. Disarmament cannot be negotiated in isolation from those who are affected by its success or failure. An inclusive Conference is a strengthened Conference. It is a more relevant, transparent and future-oriented one. It is unacceptable that 16 States were blocked in the 2025 session from participating in the work of the CD. It represents a blatant disregard for the principle of inclusivity. We call on all CD Member States to avoid political obstructions and to allow interested observer States, who through their yearly contributions to the UN budget also finance the CD, to participate in the work of the Conference.

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.

Madam President,

2026 will be decisive for the global nuclear order. The upcoming 11th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be key to uphold the authority and centrality of the NPT, a treaty that remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament according to its Article VI, and an important element in developing nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. It is crucial to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Treaty faces notable challenges, including increasingly high tensions and a resurgence of nuclear rhetoric, as witnessed by Russia's actions in its unjustified and illegal full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, with Moscow prioritising its war effort over its non-proliferation and disarmament obligations and commitments. The EU condemns in the strongest possible way Russia's actions, its nuclear rhetoric and its threats to use nuclear force in its war of aggression against Ukraine, which are irresponsible, provocative, dangerous and escalatory. Ongoing regional proliferation crises, China's rapid and opaque expansion of its nuclear arsenal inconsistent with its disarmament commitments under the NPT, and an uneven implementation of obligations and commitments, also contribute to this complex situation. The EU strongly encourages nuclear-weapon States to pursue discussions on confidence-building, transparency and verification, laying the ground for the negotiation of robust future arms control agreements and reporting.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to uphold and strengthen the norm against nuclear testing. It reiterates its strong support for the CTBT and its entry into force, urges all Annex 2 States to sign and ratify it without delay, and calls on all States to uphold moratoria on nuclear testing. Any explosive nuclear test by any State would be harmful and destabilising for international peace and security. The EU also calls on Russia to reverse its unprecedented decision to revoke its ratification of the CTBT.

The EU also calls upon Russia to immediately return to compliance and fulfil all its obligations under the New START treaty, and calls for urgent work towards a successor agreement. If the New START Treaty expires before such a successor agreement can be concluded, the EU encourages the United States and Russia to maintain the agreed limits on their nuclear arsenals.

Madam President,

Disarmament is not an abstract exercise. It is about human security, development, and ensuring the survival of future generations. The Conference on Disarmament has a choice in 2026: to remain a symbol of missed opportunities, or to become once again a forum for meaningful negotiation, and collective responsibility. Persistent impasse raises questions regarding the efficiency and proportionality of the resources allocated to the CD.

The EU chooses engagement, inclusivity and ambition. We call on all members to do the same - for the credibility of this Conference, for the success of the NPT Review Conference, and for the security of us all.

Thank you, Madam President.