

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY DIRECTORATE

Disarmament, Non-Proliferation
and Arms Export Control Division

EU joint reply to UNGA Resolution 79/27

“Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context”

28 May 2025

1. Building trust incrementally and carefully is important in a mediation process. Trust needs to be built around the process constructed by the mediators and the parties, through pre-talks, agreed methodologies and shared language. Clarity on the process enables trust. Confidence building measures (CBMs) can be a tool in this trust building, before, at the start or during negotiations, in the beginning or in the middle of the negotiations.
2. While there is no universally accepted definition, CBMs can be defined as “actions or processes undertaken in all phases of a conflict cycle with aim of increasing transparency and the level of trust and confidence between two or more conflict parties”. When applied early, as tensions arise, CBMs can help prevent conflict outbreaks in the first place. They can improve relations and create a more conducive and inclusive environment for peaceful political solution, bringing closer together all relevant domestic and international stakeholders, including by establishing direct and indirect communication channels. If successful, CBM’s can become themselves key steps in a peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts.
3. The European Union (EU) in 2024 and 2025 continued pursuing its efforts to work for the peaceful resolution of the problems of regional instability and insecurity and of the conflict situations. The EU continued its support for the establishment of regional and sub-regional confidence- and security-building measures as an important tool to build trust, enhance transparency and military predictability, avoid conflict and maintain stability, especially in situations of armed confrontation and areas of tension. Based on the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, the EU sought to advance the general arms control and disarmament processes.
4. Several current protracted conflicts reflect largely stalled Track I mediation efforts. Among the various factors that bring peace processes to a halt, the loss of trust and confidence is fundamental. In mediation processes, the EU made repeated efforts to engage key actors and present new options that could bring parties back to the negotiation table. The introduction of specific ceasefire monitoring to be shared by all parties involved is a CBM to build confidence and trust on the security of information.
5. A proxy element of conflict - whereby international and regional states are indirectly involved by supporting armed factions on the ground, or directly engaged in a conflict themselves to support one side or the other - provides little incentive to commit to peace processes and negotiations. CBMs become all the more important in such cases, whether they be between and among national-level parties to a conflict, regional and international actors and/or broader constituencies of citizens. As regional and international actors become involved in confidence building measures, however, citizen inclusivity often

experiences a downturn due to the design of such processes. The EU has been promoting the importance of inclusion of civil society in all peace processes it is involved and in all phases of it, through globally significant support to Track II and Track III dialogues to ensure the civil society constituencies are consulted and their ideas heard.

6. The EU is a longstanding supporter and promoter of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCoC) as the only multilateral transparency and confidence building instrument addressing the spread of ballistic missiles. The EU advocates the universality, full implementation and enhanced functioning of the Code. The EU diplomatic support of the HCoC is enhanced by a number of consecutive EU projects, adopted by EU Council Decisions (CFSP), financing outreach activities, including side-events, research papers, expert meetings and regional awareness seminars, usually also involving the rotating HCoC Chair. With Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/124, the EU continues to support the universalization, full implementation and enhancement of the HCoC.
7. Nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions represent a serious threat to international peace and security and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. Since its opening for signature in 1996, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has helped stop that practice while also serving as a strong confidence- and security building measure: internationally, regionally and bilaterally. The EU believes that the entry into force of the Treaty, through the signature and ratification by the remaining Annex II States will constitute a tangible step towards building trust and peace. The early entry into force and the universalization of the CTBT are important objectives of the EU Strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. All EU Member States have demonstrated their commitment to the Treaty by ratifying it and by applying its basic obligations. The CTBT is a strong confidence- and security-building measure. The EU promotes consistently the benefits and the contribution of the Treaty to peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation, including in its civil applications, including through EU's financial support for the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization (CTBTO).
8. The EU remains a strong advocate for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Pending such negotiations and entry into force of an FMCT, the EU considers voluntary moratoria on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices to be important confidence building measures that can contribute to transparency, mutual trust, and a more conducive environment for future treaty negotiations. We call on all States concerned that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.
9. The EU acknowledges the importance of nuclear weapon free zones for peace and security, in accordance with Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The EU recognises that treaty-based security assurances are available to nuclear weapon free zones and encourages nuclear weapon States to sign and ratify the relevant protocols of the Treaties establishing nuclear weapon free zones drawn up following the requisite consultations. The EU also call on those States in existing nuclear weapon free zones that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the relevant nuclear weapon free zone treaties. Since 2019, the EU has provided funding for the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in support of a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a WMDFZ in the Middle East – most recently through Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/1306 of 26 June 2023 in support of a project on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East (ME WMDFZ) in an evolving regional security environment. The EU

continues to call on all States in the region, which have not yet done so, to join the NPT, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), to sign and ratify the CTBT, to conclude a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, the Additional Protocol and, as applicable, a modified Small Quantities Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and to subscribe to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missiles Proliferation (HCoC) All these instruments would serve as important confidence- and security-building measures and could constitute tangible steps towards the establishment of a zone.

10. The EU Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence (CoE) Initiative is funded and implemented by the European Union through the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe. It addresses the mitigation of and preparedness against risks related to CBRN material and agents. The Initiative is led by the European Commission’s Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), in close coordination with the European External Action Service (EEAS). The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) provides technical support to Partner Countries, while the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) ensures a coherent and effective national, regional and international implementation. Other relevant International and/or Regional Organizations and experts also contribute to the Initiative, which represents the EU’s largest civilian external security programme. Where appropriate, the CBRN CoE Initiative works in cooperation with international and regional partners, such as IAEA, OPCW, UNODA, BWC-ISU, WHO, OIE, FAO, INTERPOL, EUROPOL, NATO, the UNSC 1540 Committee, the Arab League, the African Union, ASEAN, ISTC and the G7 Global Partnership Programme; each contributing its own unique expertise according to its institutional mandate.
11. In February 2024, the Council adopted its Decision (CFSP) 2024/645 in support of strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America in line with the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as a follow on to the previous Decision from December 2019. The EU funding allows the Organization of American States (OAS) to provide technical and legislative assistance to strengthen, in beneficiary countries, regulations on biosafety and biosecurity and ensure their harmonization with international standards, to promote and enhance regional cooperation and to raise awareness, educate and organize training on biosafety and biosecurity.
12. Building national capacities and strengthening regional cooperation remain central to the EU efforts, as set out in the EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition of 2018. In this context, the EU cooperates closely with UN regional centres and regional and sub-regional organizations.
13. In South East Europe, the EU continues to provide significant support for small arms control capacity building through the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), which operates under the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) by means of Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/3006. Furthermore, under Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/2321, the EU continues to support the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in the Western Balkans, originally adopted at the London summit in July 2018. The EU-Western Balkans Summit Declaration of 13 December 2023 confirmed the extension of the Roadmap’s implementation beyond the initial target date of 2024. In 2024, the Council adopted its Decision (CFSP) 2024/3097 in support of the comprehensive programme on supporting efforts to prevent and combat illicit trafficking of SALW and Conventional Ammunition in South-Eastern Europe, building on Decision (CFSP)

2021/2133. In addition, under Council Decision 2024/3003, building on Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2009, the EU supports the OSCE activities to combat illicit trafficking in weapons, ammunition and explosives in Ukraine.

14. The EU strongly supports African-led efforts in the area of peace and security, including the African Union ambition to “silence the guns in Africa”. The EU SALW control related activities are implemented in close partnership with the African Union, its Member States, the UN and regional organisations, notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In the context of the EU's support for Africa's Peace and Security Architecture funded by the African Peace Facility, the EU assistance has helped to improve physical security and stockpile management in existing conventional arms and ammunition depots in the Central African Republic and the Sahel region, and collect and destroy arms and ammunition across West Africa.
15. In Latin America, the EU contributes to the enhancement of small arms control capacities of several Latin American and Caribbean States through the Organization of American States (OAS). Through Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/847, the EU supports the efforts of the OAS to prevent and combat the illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, ammunition and their impact in the Americas. Preparations for the continuation of the EU support for the OAS's efforts in the Americas are under way, subject to a decision of the EU Council in the first semester of 2025.
16. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a landmark instrument aiming at enhancing greater responsibility and transparency in the trade of arms. Since the ATT's inception, the EU has provided constant support to various aspects of the Treaty. In 2024, the EU continued promoting its universalisation and effective implementation in various political dialogues. In addition to these diplomatic efforts, the EU funded the ATT implementation support program providing technical assistance to a good number of beneficiary countries in Latin America, in Africa, in Central and South East Asia, in Eastern Europe, and the Caucasus, aiming at strengthening their national systems, in line with the requirements of the Treaty, under Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2309, replaced in February 2025 by Council Decision (CFSP) 2025/442. The EU also continued to fund a project implemented by and in support of the ATT Secretariat, under Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/2296. In the ATT-related outreach, the EU employs and promotes regional approach, emphasizing the role of neighbouring countries implementing similar controls to bring tangible benefits in fighting arms trafficking and cross-border organised crime in general, which often could be tackled effectively only by cross-border cooperation, to eliminate the legal and operational vacuum. Neighbouring countries are also better placed to provide peer-to-peer advice suited to local conditions, and regional activities serve to create working relationships and trust among counterparts from participating States.
17. The EU recognizes an immense confidence-building value of transparency in armaments, including in arms trade. All EU Member States fulfil their reporting obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty. The EU publishes detailed data on arms exports of its Member States every year. The 26th EU Annual Report on exports of military technology and equipment in the year 2023 was released in December 2024 and is publicly available in a searchable online database on the website of the European External Action Service. This database has been of great benefit to all stakeholders, enhancing transparency. The EU encourages other regional and national bodies to implement similar systems. The EU annual report displays the number and value of authorised exports for all destination countries, the type of military technology involved as per EU Common Military List mirroring the Wassenaar Arrangement Munitions List, and the number of denials per type of military technology and destination country, as well as the criteria invoked as the reason for denial. The EU also encourages simultaneous reporting on trade in arms by regional states as a confidence-

building measure, where lack of confidence in transparency is an issue preventing the fulfilment of obligations under ATT and commitments towards UNROCA.

18. The EU has a long history of support to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention and mine action. For more than two decades, the EU and the EU Member States have been supporting mine clearance, stockpile destruction, assistance to victims, awareness raising, advocacy, and research & development for the detection and clearance of mines for humanitarian and development purposes. In addition, the Council adopted its Decision (CFSP) 2025/781 in support of the Siem Reap-Angkor Action Plan for the implementation of the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.
 19. Many other EU assistance activities focus on promoting universal adherence to and national implementation of key international instruments, including the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, UN Security Council Resolution 1540, to name just a few.
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