

Approach of the Russian Federation to the methods of work of the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC)

In light of the upcoming three-day discussion at the UNDC regular session (New York, 6-24 April 2026) on its methods of work pursuant to the UNGA Resolution 80/66 “Report of the UNDC”, we would like to share Russia’s approach to this issue.

We advocate for the integrity and effectiveness of the UN disarmament “triad”, an important element of which is the UNDC. We consider the Commission as the unique specialized advisory body which allows to conduct in-depth discussions on key issues in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation (ACDN) and to submit relevant recommendations to the UNGA. We are strictly guided by the final document of the UNGA First Special Session on Disarmament held in 1978 which clearly defined the terms of reference of the Commission. In the context of UNDC methods of work we rely on the above-mentioned document as well as relevant UNGA resolutions and decisions, primarily 44/119C (annex) and 52/492.

We acknowledge the UNDC contribution to the multilateral efforts in the field of ACDN. Among the significant results of the UNDC work in recent years there are recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons (A/72/42) as well as on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities (A/78/42). We look forward to completing the UNDC current three-year cycle in 2026 with the adoption of recommendations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as on emerging technologies in context of the international security.

The ideas to “optimize the UNDC work” are actively promoted by a group of countries both in the UNDC itself and other ACDN multilateral fora. Under the pretext of liquidity crisis as well as the UN-80 reform initiative, they put forward proposals to reduce the duration of plenary sessions and the number of meetings, to merge discussions, to reduce the time and number of national and group statements and interventions to exercise the right of reply. There are calls to reconsider the principle of consensus, to cancel translation into all six UN official languages, to expand the participation of non-governmental entities. Despite the declared good intentions, the implementation of the proposed measures may result in serious

negative consequences for the functioning of multilateral formats and implementation of their mandates. This is completely relevant to the UNDC.

Given the Commission's main objective is to conduct in-depth discussions on specific issues of ACDN as well as to develop recommendations, further decreasing the already limited time of discussions can devalue the existing dialogue on important aspects of the international agenda. We believe that reducing the duration of statements will inevitably lead to the dilution of their substance, turn the statements into brief slogans without arguments and explanations, transform exchange of views into a formality. Time pressure deprives of opportunities for flexible reaction, convergence of positions and search for compromise. The superficial consideration of international security issues may lead to distrust and misunderstandings. Under such circumstances prospects to reach consensual agreements will be limited. Meanwhile, countries of the Global South may find themselves in this situation in the most vulnerable position. Multilateral fora often provide them with the significant opportunity to present their positions, to promote national priorities and initiatives, as well as to participate in decision-making in the field of ACDN.

We consider the measures to "optimize" the work of the UNDC as an attempt to revise the existing UN disarmament machinery, to turn this multilateral format into an invalid structure, deprived of opportunities for an equal dialogue and tools for collective decisions based on the principle of consensus. Proponents of such measures stake on "narrow" formats, where they can easier cook decisions that are profitable for a certain group of countries. Within such formats some non-binding principles and rules are developed with the aim to substitute norms of the international law. The replacement of official meetings with informal discussions without interpretation, which has been frequently practiced recently, is also quite often used to reduce the number of participating delegations and to limit the transparency of discussions. Ignoring the opinions of the majority of Member States and imposing on them approaches that have already been agreed upon in a "narrow circle" are the methods used by the authors of the ideas to "optimize" the work of the UNDC. Such actions can seriously damage multilateral diplomacy, paralyze the disarmament "triad" and undermine its authority. This will inevitably

have negative consequences for ACDN, as well as for the international security as a whole.

We proceed from the fact that in the current geopolitical realities characterized by a progressive systematic crisis in the field of ACDN collective efforts based on dialogue remain the most important factor in maintaining regional and international security. It is important to focus on ensuring the proper effectiveness of multilateral instruments, building their activities on the basis of genuine equality, mutual understanding, as well as on taking into account the legitimate interests of all the parties. The inability of the international community to resolve the existing contradictions that have accumulated in this area is not caused by the shortcomings of the disarmament fora, but rather by the unwillingness of certain countries to engage in equal and mutually respectful dialogue as well as their intention to turn multilateral formats into an instrument of pressure on “undesirable” countries.

The Russian Federation proceeds from the relevance and effectiveness of the current UNDC methods of work. We see no need to revise them. In order to discuss in-depth the various aspects of ACDN, as it is stipulated by the UNDC mandate, we consider it important to keep the three-week duration of the substantive session, as well as the traditional number of meetings and the format of national statements. It is essential to maintain the UNDC work based on the principle of consensus, which ensures the respect of interests of each Member State, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of decisions taken. It is essential to guarantee the interpretation of discussions into all official UN languages. The participation of non-state actors shall be in accordance with the UNGA rules of procedure and the UNDC established practice, shall be carried out without prejudice to the intergovernmental nature of the Commission as well as without provoking politicization of discussions and confrontation between the UN Member States.

We firmly believe that any fundamental changes in the UNDC principles and methods of work should be a subject of thorough expert analysis within the Commission and be approved by consensus at a special UNGA session on disarmament.