



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

**First Preparatory Committee for the 11th Review Conference of the Parties
Vienna, 31 July – 11 August 2023**

**General Statement delivered by
Ambassador Leonardo Bencini
Head of the delegation of Italy
1 August 2023**

Mr. Chair,

Allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties as Chair. I would also like to thank you for your skilful steering last week of the Working Group on strengthening the review process. Although we could not agree on a substantive report, the debate showed an encouraging degree of convergence to be further developed in future.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I will add some comments in my national capacity.

It has been a year since we gathered in New York for the X NPT Review Conference. Although that conference failed to adopt a Final outcome document, due to the Russian Federation blocking consensus, it revealed common ground on a number of issues and confirmed the enduring relevance and centrality of the Treaty.

Even in these most trying times, we firmly believe that the solution lies not outside but within the Treaty, in the full implementation of its provisions. Italy reaffirms its strong and unwavering belief in the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential component of nuclear disarmament efforts. We view its three pillars as complementary and mutually reinforcing and call for the full implementation of commitments taken during previous Review Conferences.

Italy believes in the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, and fully supports disarmament efforts in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty. Nuclear weapon

States bear fundamental responsibilities and we continue to call upon those with the largest arsenals to take concrete steps towards effective nuclear disarmament through further reductions and increased transparency, and to actively engage in strengthening the entire disarmament architecture.

Mr. Chair,

We condemn the Russian Federation's irresponsible use of nuclear rhetoric in the context of its ongoing illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. We urge the Russian Federation to recommit – in words and deeds – to the principles enshrined in the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states issued in January 2022. The Russian Federation's intention to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus is irresponsible and dangerous and undermines the NPT.

Nuclear weapons, for as long as they exist, should only serve defensive purposes, deter aggression and prevent war and coercion. In this context, we call on the Russian Federation to return to the full implementation of the New Start Treaty.

Mr. Chair,

Italy, including in its current capacity as Co-Coordinator of the Article XIV Conference of the CTBT, strongly supports its early entry into force and calls upon States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty immediately.

Italy also supports the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations, in the framework of the Conference of Disarmament in Geneva, on a Treaty banning the production of Fissile Material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Let me also recall the importance of measures on strategic and nuclear risk reduction as a pathway to increase confidence within the international security environment and as an important contribution to facilitate progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chair,

The IAEA's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, together with the Additional Protocol, remains a core component of the NPT. The Agency's system of safeguards is crucial to ensure the peaceful character of nuclear activities, thus preserving and fostering global security.

We remain extremely concerned by the serious threat posed by Russia's continued control over, and actions in and around, Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). We fully support the IAEA's and DG Grossi's efforts to ensure the safety and

security of the ZNPP, while fully respecting Ukrainian sovereignty over the plant and the region, and of all Ukrainian nuclear sites and we are about to provide a new, sizable financial contribution to the Agency to this end.

Mr Chair,

Italy continues to believe that a restored Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action must remain a key priority for the international community. We urge Iran to return to fully implement its obligations under the JCPoA without delay. In this respect, we support all diplomatic efforts meant to avert nuclear crisis and to ease tensions in the region. We commend and continue to fully support the IAEA's crucial mandates and efforts in Iran.

The repeated ballistic missile launches by the DPRK undermine regional and international peace and security and are a matter of serious concern. We urge the DPRK to refrain from further provocations and to take concrete steps towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization; to return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); to fully comply with IAEA safeguards and to sign and ratify the CTBT.

Mr. Chair,

Italy supports the inalienable right of all NPT Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear resources for peaceful purposes in conformity with the Treaty. Italy strongly believes that any project involving nuclear energy should integrate elements of safeguards, safety, security, emergency preparedness and response. Italy firmly supports multilateral export control regimes as valuable tools to enhance and reinforce the international non-proliferation architecture and to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials, scientific and technological information for peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we are strongly committed to integrate gender perspectives across the three pillars of the NPT and its review cycle.

I thank you Mr. Chair.