



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

Conference on Disarmament

Statement delivered by Amb. Leonardo Bencini, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament

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Madam President,

At the outset let me assure you once again of Italy's support over these last two weeks of this year's session. We are ready to work with you and other delegations towards a meaningful, consensual report. A repetition of what happened in 2022 would benefit no one and we must use the time we have wisely, and make every effort, to avoid just that.

In this respect, the Draft that you have submitted for our consideration is a good starting point, and we commend you for it. The Draft Report seems to us a rather faithful and factual reflection of the way we conducted our works this year, although some improvements in our view could still be made.

In our view, considering the unchanged international context and delegations' unchanged positions on key issues, this year's session has been overall a moderately positive one. There has been light and shade, and they should both be adequately reflected. Let me focus on the latter, to begin.

Your draft report indicates in paragraph 9 that the Conference was unable to take any decision on the requests of non-member States to participate in the works of the Conference. When we discussed this issue at the end of January, we noticed overwhelming support to continue the prevailing practice of accepting the list of requests in its entirety. One delegation in particular opposed this well-established way of proceeding on this matter and further informal consultations did not lead to a positive solution. It is fitting therefore that the report refers to the views expressed by delegations at that time and reflected in the plenary records. However, we

consider that it is not enough to mention 35 plus 4 requests, it is necessary, and fair to those who put those requests forward, that each one of those 39 countries be mentioned by name in paragraph 9. This was done in past reports.

Clearly, this development marked a new low for the CD. For the first time in a long time, observer States could not take part. I would like to use this opportunity to remind delegations of Italy's full support not only for the option of accepting the requests as a single list but more generally for the participation of *any* UN member states who wishes to have its voice heard at the CD, without any vetting. This would eliminate the need for approval of their requests at every session.

Every country has a stake in the issues that we discuss here. Leaving those countries out, not giving them even the possibility of stating their views and not having, us member states, the possibility of listening to their concerns, risks delegitimising this forum. Besides, as the CD's budget is included in that of the United Nations, we have this year achieved the goal of taxation without representation – something that certainly does not further either the authoritativeness or legitimacy of this forum. We strongly hope that this is not repeated in 2024, when we meet in January at the opening of the next session.

I appeal to delegations that presented requests to participate as observers not to be deterred from presenting a new request next year and, in the meantime, to make full use of rule of procedure 32 that states “representatives of non-member States shall have reserved seats in the conference room during plenary meetings”; and also of rule 33 which states that “interested states not members of the Conference may submit to the Conference written proposals or working documents on measures of disarmament which are the subject of negotiation in the Conference and may participate in the discussion of the subject matter of such proposals or working documents”. There is clearly no need for a previous authorisation by the CD for non-member states' participation under rule 32 or rule 33.

Now let me focus on the positive part. We are grateful to the various Presidencies, especially to those of Finland, France and Germany, for bringing to the attention of the CD very relevant and important issues, some of them new, and for having refined the practice of concept papers, expert panels and interactive

discussions. The CD can only benefit from a model like this, where we feed into our deliberations external expert advice, and we hope that future Presidencies will build on this experience.

This year we could not find agreement on the programme of work and the institution of subsidiary bodies either. This circumstance makes it even more important to mention appropriately in the report the discussions that we did have, even in an informal setting, under agenda item 6. We appreciated, for instance, the initiative of the French and German presidencies to discuss the issue of the revitalisation of the CD. We think that it was probably the most interesting new development in our works at this session. We welcomed the informal retreat in Montreux and the discussions we also had in this room. We also found both the compendium of UNIDIR and its report on the Montreux retreat very useful. We highly value the possibility for Member States to exchange views on the vital issue of the revitalisation of the CD in itself and within the entire disarmament machinery. In this context, we also welcomed the plenary meeting on the UN SG's New Agenda for Peace.

Item 6 has served this Conference well when discussing new developments. Another positive experience was, in our view, the debate under this item on Artificial intelligence in the military domain, proposed by the German Presidency. It is high time that this body considered the issue of AI which will likely be very relevant in our future deliberations.

For all the reasons outlined above, Italy strongly supports paragraphs 43, 44, 45 and 47 and the reference to documents CD 2328, 2331 and 2335 in the appendix. In reference to this latter article, we would like to add to the document number also its full title.

Concerning the proposals by the Russian Federation, we take note of them but have not had the time for a thorough examination.

I thank you Madam President