



Permanent Mission of Italy  
UN - Geneva

## Conference on Disarmament

### Thematic discussion on Item 1

### Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament

**delivered by Ambassador Leonardo Bencini,  
Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament**

*Geneva, 21 March 2024*

Mr. President,

Let me also wish happy Nowruz to those that celebrate it and thank you for this gift.

Mr. President,

The world may be on the cusp of a new nuclear age and of a new arms race. It is for this very reason imperative to preserve and strengthen the multilateral architecture for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The cessation of the nuclear arms race can only be attained through a progressive approach, based on concrete measures, resulting in effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. The Non Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of these efforts. Through its Article VI, it provides the only realistic legal framework to attain a world without nuclear weapons, in a way that promotes international stability based on the principle of undiminished security for all. Make no mistake about it: there is no alternative to the NPT.

Nuclear-weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities for the implementation of disarmament efforts. We continue to call upon those with the largest arsenals to take concrete steps towards effective nuclear disarmament through further reductions.

Italy emphasizes the importance of transparency with regard to nuclear weapons, especially given the challenging nature of the current international security. We welcome measures already taken by the France, the United Kingdom and the United States to promote effective transparency measures through providing data on their nuclear forces and the objective size of their nuclear arsenal and call on others that have not yet done so to follow suit.

Mr. President,

Most of the practical and effective measures needed to implement disarmament efforts are already embodied in the relevant actions of the 2010 Action Plan. Among these, the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains

one of our key priorities. As a staunch supporter of the CTBT and in its former capacity of Co-Coordinator of the Article XIV Conference, Italy strongly supports its universalisation and calls upon States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without any further delay – or, in the case of the Russian Federation, to reconsider its decision to withdraw its ratification. In the meantime, we call upon all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear test explosions and to refrain from any action that could undermine the objectives and purpose of the Treaty.

Another key priority for Italy remains the immediate start of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Starting a negotiation on an FMCT does not in itself prejudge its outcome. We are sure there could be ways to take into consideration the security concerns of certain countries so that we can finally start negotiations, nearly thirty years after the first relevant resolution was adopted at the UN General Assembly.

We also support the resumption of substantive discussions on Negative Security Assurances, within the context of a comprehensive and balanced program of work, with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all their aspects, not excluding an international legally binding instrument. In this regard, we also wish to reiterate our support for the establishment of Zones Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Italy also values all initiatives undertaken in the field of nuclear disarmament verification, as important tools to build trust and confidence among nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States. In this regard, we support the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

Mr. President,

The deteriorating international environment calls for immediate actions to avert the use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, Italy would like to express its strong support to strategic and nuclear risk reduction initiatives. Disarmament and strategic and nuclear risk reduction efforts must be pursued in parallel, each reinforcing the other. Italy stresses the need to maintain effective channels of communication among nuclear-weapon states and to adopt a series of instruments addressing and reducing the range of risks that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons. Risk-reduction measures should be considered as a pathway to increase confidence within the international security environment and as an important contribution to facilitate progress towards a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT.

Mr President,

We recall the joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states issued in January 2022 affirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Nuclear weapons, for as long as they exist, should only serve defensive purposes, deter aggression and prevent war and coercion. We condemn the Russian Federation's irresponsible use of nuclear rhetoric in the context of its ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and call on the Russian Federation to recommit – in words and deeds – to the principles enshrined in the January 2022 statement.

I thank you, Mr President.