



Permanent Mission of Italy to the  
Conference on Disarmament

## **Conference on Disarmament**

### **Agenda item 1 “On the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament”**

#### **Approaches for the pursuit of negotiations on nuclear disarmament within the Conference on Disarmament**

#### **Statement delivered by Ambassador Leonardo Bencini, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Geneva, 28 May 2024

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you on taking on the Presidency of the CD. We look forward to working together with you both in this room and within the P6+2 group. You can count on our support.

I would also like to thank you for organizing today’s thematic debate. The CD is uniquely placed to discuss the issue of nuclear disarmament and should be in a position to start negotiations on new key instruments, namely on FMCT and negative security assurances. But I will revert to that later.

Italy would like once again to reaffirm its firm belief in the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, an essential component of nuclear disarmament and of the multilateral architecture. We look forward to the upcoming second session of the

Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference that will take place in July here in Geneva, and beyond that to the Review Conference itself. It is our collective responsibility to put this process back on a consensual track, to avoid a third Review Conference in a row without a consensual final document. This should be our shared priority. In the current, gravely deteriorated security environment, it is even more necessary to support, uphold and preserve the NPT.

Italy fully shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world completely free of nuclear weapons. We reiterated this commitment by joining the G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament. Through its Article VI, the NPT 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.

Our utmost concern for the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons underpins our efforts for effective progress in nuclear disarmament, a goal we firmly believe can be achieved through a progressive, realistic, pragmatic and responsible approach, based on concrete measures, resulting in an effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament.

In this regard, we recall that Nuclear-weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities for the implementation of disarmament efforts in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty. We continue to call upon those with the largest arsenals to take concrete steps towards effective nuclear disarmament through further reductions. Nuclear weapons, for as long as they exist, should only serve defensive purposes, deter aggression and prevent war and coercion. 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. This statement is even more valid now than it was when it was adopted just over two years ago. We condemn the Russian Federation's irresponsible use of nuclear rhetoric in the context of its ongoing unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine

and call on Russia to recommit – in words and deeds – to the principles enshrined in the January 2022 statement.

Italy also 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 United States, France and the United Kingdom 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. Italy is a staunch supporter of the CTBT. We were pleased to see that, during the 2021-2023 period, under Italy's co-Presidency of the Conference on Article XIV, eight new countries acceded to the Treaty. Italy strongly supports its universalisation and calls upon States that have not yet done so – in particular the now nine annex II States – to sign and ratify the Treaty without any further delay. 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.

Italy regrets Russia's decision to revoke its ratification of the CTBT and is concerned at Russian statements with respect to nuclear explosive testing. We call on Moscow to continue to adhere to its moratorium on nuclear tests and to renew its ratification of the CTBT.

It also calls on the DPRK not to conduct any further tests and to sign and ratify the CTBT.

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. Pending the conclusion of an FMCT, all relevant States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Italy

is glad to have joined a cross-regional group of friends of the FMCT together with Japan and other countries. We look forward to working within this group to give new impetus to the goal of starting negotiations on an FMCT without delay.

We also support the resumption of substantive discussions in the CD 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 internationally 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 that can avert the use of nuclear weapons and be conducive to a more stable and secure environment. In this regard, Italy would like to express its strong support to strategic and nuclear risk reduction initiatives. Far from being a substitute for nuclear disarmament, we view risk reduction as a necessary tool to, among other things, build trust and foster a climate conducive to disarmament negotiations. Nuclear risk reduction can pave the way for disarmament and should be pursued in parallel with it, each reinforcing the other.

I thank you, Mr. President.