



**Delegation of Italy to
the Conference on Disarmament
Geneva**

**Conference on Disarmament
Item 6, “Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament”**

**Thematic Debate on Disarmament and Education
Building capacity in disarmament through education and research**

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

Geneva, 6 June 2024

Mister President,

We thank you for organising this debate. Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I will make the following remarks in my national capacity.

I would like to thank the three panellists for giving us an overview of the initiatives in this field. Their number is impressive and this is extremely encouraging. We very much share UNODA’s approach to demystify and take disarmament out of its “bubble” and make it part of overall educational framework.

The importance of disarmament education has been recognised since 1978, when the First Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-I) established the Conference on Disarmament. In the Final document of SSOD-I, Member States noted the urgency of promoting education for disarmament and encouraged teaching and research. They also called on governments and civil society alike to develop programs of education for disarmament and peace studies at all levels with the aim to contribute to greater understanding and awareness of the problems created by the arms race and the need for disarmament.

In line with the UN Secretary General’s 2018 “Agenda for Disarmament”, Italy believes that disarmament education contributes to the creation of a culture of peace and non-violence. More education and training opportunities should be established to allow young generations to be a force for change. Disarmament education is also an enabler

for the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by contributing to education on peace and non-violence, conflict resolution, gender equality and human rights.

Italy is a supporter of the objectives and recommendations laid out in the United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education as well as in Resolution 78/31 “Youth, Disarmament and Non-proliferation”. The Resolution, inter alia, encourages Member States, the United Nations and relevant specialised agencies to promote the meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in discussions in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation through dialogue platforms, fellowship, internships and scholarships, a goal Italy has been supporting for decades.

As President of the G7 this year, Italy has paid special attention to education in disarmament. In the statement of the G7 Non-proliferation Directors (NPDG) Group, we reiterated our support for long-term solutions to ensure that knowledge in the field of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament does not get lost. We also committed to encourage young professionals to enter the field and mid-level professionals to further enhance their skills through courses and trainings. In the statement, we supported global efforts to enhance education and professional development, noting the contribution of efforts to engage youth globally such as the establishment of an International Day for Disarmament and Non-proliferation Awareness. We commended a number of initiatives to champion youth and gender equality and inclusion in this field, among them the Young Women Next Generation Initiative (YWNGI) established by the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium (EUNPDC).

Mr. President,

Since the mid-1970, Italy has sponsored approximately 2000 positions within the Junior Professional Officers Program (JPO). For a period of two years, potentially three, this programme allows qualified young professionals to work in international organisations within the UN system, including the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and that provides a concrete opportunity for recruitment in the future.

Our continuous attention to gender equality and inclusivity aspects makes us also a donor to the “Women in AI Fellowship” implemented by UNIDIR and to the “Early Career African Women in Science Fellowship”, implemented by the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) in Trieste, which aims at enhancing the Implementation of Article X of the Biological Weapons Convention. The project provides African women with a short-term fellowship to perform research work and training at the ICGEB laboratories based in Italy, India or South Africa, for a nine-month-period.

Finally, I would like to recall Italy’s enduring contribution to mine action within the framework of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Cluster

Munitions Convention (CCM). The programs we support in different affected areas of the world do not just include clearance but also a strong component dedicated to risk education. Awareness raising, education and training significantly help reduce the risk of injury from mines and unexploded ordnance facilitating the return of affected communities to the socio-economic life of their countries empowering long term growth and stability.

Thank you for your attention.