



Mission of Italy to the
Conference on Disarmament

**Conference on Disarmament
Subsidiary Body 2
Prevention of nuclear war: practical and political measures**

**Statement by Ambassador Leonardo Bencini
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Chair,

First of all, I would like to thank you for convening today's meeting on a crucial topic such as practical and political measures for the prevention of a nuclear war. Please allow me also to thank the panelists for their well-informed and interesting presentations and the historical perspective that they gave us on the issue of risk reduction.

Italy would like to express its strong support to strategic and nuclear risk reduction initiatives. First, we would like to reject the false dichotomy between nuclear disarmament and nuclear risk reduction. In fact, the two go hand in hand. Far from being a substitute for nuclear disarmament, risk reduction is a necessary tool not only to prevent nuclear war but also to build trust and foster a climate conducive to arms control and disarmament negotiations. If we enhance the instruments of risk reduction, we will have moved a step closer to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons as envisaged in article VI of the NPT.

Let me add that risk reduction is based on predictability, transparency and trust among relevant actors. Any behavior that increases unpredictability while decreasing trust and transparency automatically increases risk.

In the face of the current geopolitical challenges and increasing proliferation threats, the adoption of measures targeted towards the reduction of nuclear risk becomes even more important. In fact, we believe that risk reduction is an area where it should be easier to reach a shared understanding both in bilateral as well as multilateral contexts, including at the next NPT Review Conference, together with progress on transparency and accountability.

While we also believe that non-nuclear weapon States should contribute to any risk reduction initiative as was indicated during the panel, we believe that the main responsibility lies with nuclear weapon States. Italy stresses the need for nuclear weapons states to maintain and enhance effective, as well as technically safe and secure, channels of communication and to adopt a series of measures addressing and reducing the range of risks that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons. We encourage the P-5 to intensify discussions on all possible measures to promote risk reduction as well as confidence building and transparency.

Besides general political and diplomatic measures that could reduce the level of international tension, there are a number of concrete measures that nuclear-weapons states can pursue to reduce the risk of miscalculations, misunderstandings, and misperceptions that could lead to a nuclear conflict. Among them I would like to mention increasing predictability through enhanced transparency and clearer nuclear doctrines; strengthening nuclear restraint through a lower operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems (de-alerting); reducing the number and types of targets (de-targeting); resuming risk-reduction dialogues and information-sharing initiatives.

The role of AI and its responsible application in the nuclear domain is worthy of growing attention from the international community. We should further consider if and how AI can contribute to improve strategic risk reduction, while at the same time carefully consider that the introduction of elements of artificial intelligence into decision-making processes in the near future may also increase risks of unintended escalation.

Nuclear disarmament verification can also contribute to promoting trust and transparency and therefore to reduce risk. In this context, we support the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification as well as the establishment of a Group of Scientific and Technical Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification. Italy fully shares the objectives, modalities and mandate as presented last week by the two proponents and we look forward to contributing to the debate that will take place in May and June in New York.

Risk can also be reduced by preserving and enhancing the multilateral architecture of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. This implies strict adherence to existing instruments such as the NPT, which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential component of nuclear disarmament efforts, but it also implies commitment to other instruments not yet in force such as the CTBT. The beginning of negotiations on an FMCT would also in and by itself reduce risk but I believe we will discuss this more in detail in future debates.

A combination of all these measures could significantly reduce the risk of nuclear war, but these measures require sustained political will and global cooperation. Italy remains fully committed to effective multilateral action and we are ready to support all efforts that could contribute to reach these objectives.