



**Statement delivered by Ambassador Leonardo Bencini,  
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament to  
the 2026 High Level Segment**

Geneva, 23 February 2026

Mr President,

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement delivered this morning by Norway on behalf of a group of countries concerning Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine.

As we gather here today, defence spending has reached an all-time high, and the world may well be on the cusp of a new arms race, including a nuclear arms race. This makes our work all the more important. It is imperative, now more than ever, to defend and preserve the multilateral architecture for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation that was built over many decades and of which the Conference on Disarmament is an integral part.

We regret that this year the CD was unable to reconfirm the agreement reached at the very beginning of the 2025 session under Italy's presidency, namely the adoption of Decision 2443 whereby the Conference reestablished subsidiary bodies, appointed the respective coordinators and defined a calendar of meetings for the entire session. This decision showed that some form of consensus is still possible within this body, that we are not so completely paralysed as some would argue. The debate we had within the Subsidiary Bodies was frank, serious, interactive and thorough. It clearly

indicated possible areas of convergence – not many but certainly some – as well as the issues where differences remain and how far apart positions are. If we did not have this debate, we would not be able to take the pulse of member states on key disarmament issues. We need to know where we stand so that, when we are ready, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, we can resume our core function again, which is to negotiate disarmament agreements.

Italy believes that an absolute priority for this body remains the immediate start of negotiations on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is high time we overcome this thirty-year-old impasse. We appeal to all Member States to use the rule of consensus judiciously and responsibly and allow the beginning of these negotiations, on the understanding that this does not in itself prejudice their outcome. We are confident there could be ways to take into consideration the security concerns of all Member States. We also support the resumption of substantive discussions on Negative Security Assurances, with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all their aspects, not excluding an international legally binding instrument.

Mr President,

It has been four years since 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. It follows that we should strive for general and complete nuclear disarmament, a goal enshrined in Article VI of the Non-proliferation Treaty. This can be achieved through a progressive approach, based on concrete measures resulting in effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament, based on the principle of undiminished security for all. As we prepare for the XI Review Conference, we would like to reaffirm that there is no alternative to the NPT. The Treaty must be preserved and strengthened, especially in these uncertain times, and the 2010 Action Plan must be fully implemented. Nuclear-weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities. We continue to call upon those with the largest

arsenals to resume negotiations on new arms control instruments and take all necessary steps towards effective nuclear disarmament through further reductions.

Italy emphasizes the importance of transparency on nuclear weapons. We welcome measures taken by France, the United Kingdom and the United States to promote transparency through provision of data on their nuclear forces and the objective size of their nuclear arsenal. We call on others to follow suit.

The deteriorating international security environment requires urgent actions to avert the use of nuclear weapons. Italy expresses its strong support to strategic and nuclear risk reduction initiatives. Disarmament and risk reduction 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. 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, particularly the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

The prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains one of our key priorities. As a staunch advocate of the CTBT, 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 to reconsider their decision to withdraw their 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.

Mr President,

Let me briefly touch upon an issue that is of utmost importance for our delegation: the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. The Working Group that was established during the IX Review Conference has

made steady progress and an agreement is within reach, provided we overcome the remaining outstanding issues. Our immediate goal is to strengthen the institutional framework of the BWC, but the longer-term goal should be the establishment of an implementing organisation coupled with an effective compliance and verification regime.

Mr. President,

Much has happened over the last four years. We have witnessed the gradual erosion of the disarmament architecture as well as actions in defiance of the UN Charter. Mutual trust is at an all-time low. But negative trends can be reversed, as history abundantly proves. It is time for the tide to turn.

I thank you, Mr President.