



**Statement delivered by Ambassador Leonardo Bencini,
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament to
the 2026 CD Plenary session**

Geneva, 9 June 2026

Mr President,

Thank you for convening this meeting on the revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament, and for your non-paper and the proposals contained therein.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by Poland on behalf of the European Union.

The revitalization of the CD is certainly not a new topic. We discuss it at regular intervals without, regrettably, any breakthrough and with very limited forward movement, if any.

We have heard that exactly three years ago, the French and German presidencies of the CD organized a retreat in Montreux to discuss this issue. We have all read the report published by UNIDIR on that retreat. It remains a very useful document and should serve as a basis for any reflection or discussion on this topic. Among other things, I would like to refer to the measures identified in that report to revitalize the CD. These measures were grouped into three categories: small steps, long strides, and major reforms.

While the long strides and major reforms were clearly too ambitious, very few of the small steps were adopted, and the majority were not, even though they were easily implementable.

Following the Montreux retreat, the CD saw some positive movement in 2024–2025. As the first President of 2025, Italy participated in the P6+2 for two years. We therefore had ample opportunity to closely observe the workings of the CD. We built on the work conducted by the six Presidencies in 2024 and on the collective engagement within the P6+2 format. By the end of the second week of our Presidency, we adopted decision 2443, through which we re-established subsidiary bodies, appointed their respective coordinators, and defined a calendar of meetings for the entire session. This was the first time such a decision had been taken in January since 1996, and only the sixth time overall during that period. In those six instances, I also include 2024, when the decision was adopted only at the end of the session, leaving no time for substantive work.

We believe that the 2025 agreement demonstrated that, despite everything, some form of consensus remains possible within the CD, and that we are not as completely paralysed as some suggest. In our view, the 2025 agreement represents the best template available under the current circumstances. It was important because it upheld the principle of continuity between sessions. Continuity means not starting from scratch every year. Renegotiating at each session what we intend to do is both time-consuming and a waste of resources.

There are also lessons to be drawn from the 2025 session regarding the work of the subsidiary bodies. The debates held within those bodies revealed some areas of convergence—admittedly few—as well as the issues where differences persist and the extent of those divergences. Without such discussions, we would be unable to gauge Member States' positions on key disarmament and non-proliferation issues. The exchanges within the subsidiary bodies, conducted in an informal setting, were frank, serious, interactive, and thorough. We need this kind of in-depth discussion, even in the absence of negotiations. We need to understand where we stand so that, when the time is right—hopefully in the not-too-distant future—we can resume our negotiating function.

Last year, we insisted in vain on reaching consensus on final reports, when we should instead have concluded our meetings with a recap session and agreed to resume the debate this year. This illustrates why the principle of continuity is so important – not only to build on our work but also to avoid the recurring sense of failure at the end of each session, often fuelled by the lack of consensus on substantive annual reports. We do not consider the adoption of a report to be the sole measure of work accomplished and results achieved. Such an approach is self-limiting and short-sighted, focusing on contingent, formal outcomes – the adoption of a written document – while losing sight of the longer-term objective of gradually paving the way for the resumption of our institutional mandate.

While we support many of the proposals contained in the UNIDIR paper mentioned earlier, I would also like to draw attention to a number of specific proposals Italy has put forward over the past few years to preserve and enhance the credibility of the CD. All of them are readily implementable without the need for an SSOD IV. Allow me to reiterate them:

- First, institutionalize the P6+2 format, including regional coordinators, as a collective decision-making body. The P6+2 should ensure consistency between Presidencies and develop concrete proposals for organizing our work;
- Second, enhance consistency and coordination between the CD and the UNDC. Streamline and rationalize the multilateral architecture, including by exploring the possibility of holding alternate sessions of the UNDC in Geneva and reducing the number of CD meetings accordingly, unless the CD is engaged in negotiations;
- Third, improve interaction with the broader UN system, for example by holding a special segment during High-Level Week involving all disarmament stakeholders: Chairs of the First Committee, the UNDC, OEWGs, and GGEs, as well as other relevant UN entities, civil society, and the private sector;
- Fourth, change the name of the CD. In 2025, we proposed this symbolic but meaningful step. Since disarmament can only be achieved while ensuring undiminished security for all, this linkage should be reflected

in the CD's very name. We therefore proposed renaming it the Conference on Security and Disarmament (CSD);

- Fifth, amend the rules of procedure to make them gender-neutral. Linguistic proposals already exist, and this could at least be implemented in the English version.

While none of these measures alone would restart negotiations, each would contribute to enhancing the CD's credibility and centrality within the multilateral disarmament architecture and help pave the way for the resumption of its negotiating mandate.

After nearly thirty years of deadlock, however, we must ask whether the CD will be able to resume its mandate at all. To be fair, the CD's inability to fulfill its mandate is not due to the CD itself. It stems from circumstances beyond our control. Deeply entrenched, decades-old differences on key issues are determined outside this room, where we have little or no influence. Moreover, the current international context is perhaps the least conducive in decades. We must remain realistic: we cannot and should not expect a breakthrough, and we should not be frustrated if one does not materialize.

Mr President,

We appreciate the focus in your the non-paper on Rule 18 and the misuse of consensus. This is indeed a key reason why we are not fulfilling our mandate, and it therefore deserves thorough examination. While we welcome proposals such as the establishment of a Special Committee to examine this issue, we are concerned that such a body could become hostage to the very problem it seeks to address – especially if it is required to adopt its report by consensus. Nevertheless, given the differing interpretations of consensus – that remains a foundational principle of the CD and of disarmament negotiations – we support a thorough discussion of this matter.

Mr President,

Italy's primary objective in this body remains the commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. Initiating negotiations does

not in any way prejudge their course or outcome. We believe it is necessary to take into account the concerns of those who are not yet ready to begin negotiations on this or other issues that could form part of a programme of work. While a comprehensive and balanced programme would be ideal, it may be unrealistic to expect the CD to undertake the substantial workload of negotiating more than two instruments simultaneously. For this reason, we consider balance—rather than comprehensiveness—to be the key criterion for a possible programme of work. Identifying one or perhaps two issues acceptable to all delegations appears to be the most realistic way to attempt to break this thirty-year deadlock.

I will not revisit the question of membership, as it has been discussed extensively in recent weeks. Let me simply underline that it remains a key issue and cannot be separated from any effort to revitalize the CD.

Thank you.