



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

Geneva, 21 August 2026

This is the last statement delivered at the Conference on Disarmament by Ambassador Bencini at the end of his mandate.

Dear Mr President,

This is the first time I take the floor during your Presidency. Let me therefore congratulate you and thank you for the draft report you have submitted to us. It is also the last time I take the floor, as today is my final day of service in Geneva as Italy's Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament. With your indulgence, Mr President, I would like to share some brief reflections with you and with the other colleagues present here today.

I arrived in May 2022, so I was able to attend the remainder of that year's CD session and four further sessions. I regret to say that this year's session has perhaps been the least productive of the five I have been able to participate in. In 2022 and 2025 we had subsidiary bodies; in 2023 we held interesting

discussions on the revitalisation of the CD and on some new topics that had never been discussed before, with the help of expert panels; in 2024 we spent the entire session negotiating the establishment of subsidiary bodies, but what was remarkable then was the extreme degree of coordination, cohesion and continuity among the six Presidencies. As the first President of 2025, Italy was in the P6+2 format for two years, so we had ample opportunity to see how things work from the inside. We still believe that in January 2025 we all achieved a remarkable result, as we approved, already in the second week of our Presidency, the decision to establish subsidiary bodies. It was the first time that such a decision had been adopted so early in the session since 1996. This seemed to bode well for the rest of the session. For eight months, we held frank, comprehensive and interactive informal discussions on all the agenda items and, even if we did not reach consensus on the SBs' reports, that debate was extremely useful and could form the basis for further discussions in a spirit of continuity.

It is therefore with regret that we could not replicate in 2026 the template we had collectively established in 2025. We reverted to the old formula of leaving it up to each President to choose which agenda item to discuss at every meeting. In spite of this, we had some interesting debates, including yesterday or a few days ago on nuclear disarmament verification. But we do believe we have taken a step back – actually, quite a few steps back – from what we achieved at the beginning of 2025. I say this because I negotiated for months with all interested delegations and realised that, in spite of all the differences, there could at least be an understanding on how to use this body. Yes, we are not fulfilling our negotiating mandate. But this is not because of this body's intrinsic shortcomings. We cannot change in this room deeply entrenched and politically sensitive decades-old divisions, nor can we change the current tense state of international relations. When mutual trust is at an all-time low and dialogue is faltering, how can we expect a breakthrough on the sensitive security questions we deal with in this body? But that does not mean that the CD does not matter.

We are concerned at a growing trend of criticism towards the CD non counterbalanced by constructive proposals or alternative approaches. Italy has on several occasions put forward a number of concrete proposals – I mentioned some of them most recently in my intervention of 24 March. We believe that, despite all the CD's limitations and while the conditions to negotiate are not met, it is still useful to meet here and discuss all relevant issues on our agenda, and perhaps new ones, as new technologies are changing the face of warfare and, consequently, of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. We welcome participation at the political level to inform the membership of new policy decisions or other decisions, as happened this year, most notably in February when US Under Secretary DiNanno came here on the day of the expiration of the New START Treaty. We also value debate on issues that, while strictly speaking not on the agenda, are highly relevant to it.

Let me conclude by saying that, although turnover has been massive, especially this year – I see very few faces of those who were here in 2022 – I was always struck and motivated by the commitment and dedication of all colleagues, from every delegation, past and present. This disarmament community is made up of competent and committed diplomats, and this in and of itself is a value to protect and nurture. It represents the human capital that we will badly need one day, hopefully soon, when we negotiate treaties again.

Mr President, sometimes, when the weather is uncertain, as is the case today, all we have to do is wait for the sun to return, and remain confident that it will.

I thank you, Mr President.