EU Statement

By

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Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, as well as the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina align themselves with this statement.

The need to promote multilateral solutions, a key principle of the EU’s external policy, is more urgent than ever. We are convinced that international cooperation through effective multilateralism remains the best way to advance national as well as collective interests which can hardly be promoted in isolation from one another in this interconnected and rapidly changing world. Commonly agreed international rules and effective and inclusive global institutions, within and beyond the UN system, are essential to ensure peace, security, human rights, prosperity and sustainable development for large and small countries alike. We can only address the major global challenges of our era by working in partnership with others, whether States, international and regional organisations, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders in order to deliver results on issues important to our citizens.

The EU and its Member States are deeply concerned over the current international and regional tensions and the deterioration of the security environment, which affect the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and can spark a dangerous spiral into an arms race, conflict and violence. It is important that all parties contribute to improving the strategic context and architecture for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular by avoiding the erosion of the rules-based multilateral system. We stress the need to preserve and further advance the general arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes and call for further progress on all aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation to enhance global security. We welcome and encourage further initiatives and processes at international and regional levels to restore dialogue and trust and promote transparency and confidence-building measures.

In the coming year, the EU will particularly focus on promoting a successful outcome of the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On its 50th anniversary, we must celebrate and reinforce the NPT as a key multilateral instrument for international peace, security and stability, promote its universalisation and enhance its implementation. The EU strongly supports all three pillars of the NPT and will continue to promote comprehensive, balanced, and full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan. We stress the need to implement all obligations and commitments under the NPT, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of Article VI, with the ultimate goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. We recall that all States Parties have

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
committed to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

We call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining Annex II States, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without further delay. Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, the EU calls on all States to uphold their moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, and to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

EU Member States are actively engaged in a variety of processes and initiatives aimed at strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The EU has become a supporter of four actions on the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament and in this context, we will devote attention to promoting universalisation and the entry into force of the CTBT as well as the start of immediate negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). We support starting such negotiations in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein.

We believe that the EU-funded regional and thematic seminars, which are being implemented by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), will help to build a common ground in support of the NPT and its three pillars on the way to the 2020 Review Conference. The EU welcomes the Stepping Stones initiative, launched at a Ministerial meeting in Stockholm on 11 June 2019, as an important contribution towards a substantive outcome of the NPT Review Conference. We welcome the new momentum on risk reduction in this and other fora.

The EU and its Member States also support the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on its activities. The EU provides funding to UNIDIR on a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

The continued non-compliance by some States with their international obligations is a matter of grave concern to the EU. The viability and effectiveness of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation agreements require that those agreements be fully complied with and enforced. Ensuring accountability and ending impunity is crucial to preserve the integrity of the established norms. Therefore, it is imperative to identify and hold accountable the perpetrators of chemical attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic. The EU reiterates that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, under any circumstances is unacceptable and violates international law and norms. We condemn the Syrian Arab Republic's continued violation of its obligations as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and we call on all UN Member States to support the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in its efforts to uphold the global norm against chemical weapons and ensure full compliance with the Convention.
The EU expresses its resolute commitment to and continued support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an achievement of multilateral diplomacy, endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2231. The EU deeply regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and the re-imposed sanctions. The EU is deeply concerned by the measures taken by Iran since the beginning of July, inconsistent with its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, as reported by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We urge Iran to reverse these activities, to refrain from any further steps that risk aggravating the situation and to provide full and timely cooperation with the IAEA including on the implementation of its Safeguards Agreement and the provisional application of the Additional Protocol. We call on all countries to refrain from taking actions that impede the implementation of the JCPOA.

The repeated ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which are violations of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, continue to undermine international work for building trust and establishing lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, free of nuclear weapons. We call on the DPRK to refrain from further provocations, and take concrete and credible steps towards building trust and confidence and abandoning all its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, as required under multiple UN Security Council resolutions. Until this happens, we will strictly enforce existing sanctions and call on all other UN Member States to do the same. We call on the DPRK to come back to the negotiation table in order to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes. We highlight the role the CTBTO and the IAEA can play in such a process. We urge the DPRK to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay and to return to compliance with its obligations under the NPT and the IAEA safeguards.

We are dismayed by the repeated attempts by a few States to challenge the authority and integrity of international organisations such as the OPCW which are fulfilling their duties in the service of the international community in a professional, objective and impartial manner. We expect all States to reaffirm their strong political support to the work of these important organisations as well as conventions such as the CWC and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) during the First Committee session.

Political will alone, however, is not enough if not backed up with sufficient resources. Once again, we urge all States to meet their financial obligations in full and on time which is the only sustainable way to overcome the current financial crisis facing several of the disarmament treaties and conventions.

The EU recalls that the two nuclear weapon States with the largest arsenals carry a special responsibility in the area of arms control and nuclear disarmament. We are deeply concerned that the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, as an important component of
European security architecture, could not be preserved given its thirty year-long contribution to European security. We are deeply disappointed that the Russian Federation did not address the serious concerns repeatedly expressed about non-compliance with the INF Treaty. The EU will continue to encourage the United States and the Russian Federation to seek further reductions to their arsenals, including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons, and pursue further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, verification activities and reporting. We attach the highest importance to the New START Treaty and would welcome early and active dialogue on its future post-2021 and on other arms control arrangements.

The EU and its Member States remain strongly committed to the prevention of an arms race in outer space. During this First Committee session, the EU will devote attention to safety, security and peaceful uses of outer space notably through advocating further transparency and confidence-building measures. We consider that a voluntary instrument, to be negotiated within the UN framework, remains the most realistic option to gain international consensus, without excluding a legally-binding instrument in the future.

The increased attention devoted to cyber security at the UN, including the resumption of the discussions on cyber issues in the context of international security within the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), is an opportunity to further advance and implement the strategic framework for conflict prevention, stability and cooperation and to ensure responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. These two processes are distinct, but complementary. We are encouraged by the constructive start of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG). The EU and its Member States support a free, open, stable and secure cyberspace where human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are upheld and apply online as they do offline. We underline the applicability of the existing international law in cyberspace, the implementation of norms of responsible state behaviour, further development and implementation of confidence building measures, and further international cooperation and sustained capacity building. We remain concerned over the rise in malicious cyber activity by State and non-State actors which could increase the risk of conflicts. We welcome continued regular dialogue with broad participation including multi-stakeholder participation.

As noted by the UN Secretary-General, advances in science and technology have brought about enormous benefits and have the potential to continue doing so in the future. Nevertheless, these advancements also have the potential to pose risks and challenges, such as may be the case with synthetic biology and genome editing, 3D printing, artificial intelligence and new weapon technologies that could alter the strategic context. We look forward to further work on these issues in appropriate international fora. We must remain responsive to fast pace developments in the field of weapons technology, be able to adequately address them and ensure that international legal frameworks remain appropriate.
We welcome the outcome of the 2019 session of the Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (GGE LAWS), as a good basis for further progress. We recall that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is the relevant international forum in this regard combining legal and military expertise and involving the private sector and civil society. We emphasise that human beings must make the decisions with regard to the use of lethal force, exert control over lethal weapons systems they use, and remain accountable for decisions over life and death in order to ensure compliance with International Law, in particular IHL and International Human Rights Law.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women is an important cross-cutting priority for the EU. Women must be fully involved, through active and equal participation, including in leadership in non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. Since our last session, the Council of the EU has adopted a new Strategy and an Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and the new EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition also underlines that the EU will systematically mainstream gender considerations in the fight against gun violence and SALW control. Next year’s 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security will be a moment to further reflect on how to effectively mainstream gender relevant considerations in UN disarmament work.

We call on all UN Member States, in particular the major arms exporters, importers and transit countries to join the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which is the only legally-binding international instrument to regulate the trade and transfer of conventional arms and ammunition, and to prevent and eradicate their illicit trade and diversion. The EU welcomes the outcome of the Fifth Conference of States Parties which took stock of the progress, practice and challenges related to the Treaty’s implementation, transparency and reporting obligations, and universalization efforts. It also promoted equal and meaningful participation of women and men and considered the gendered impact of armed conflict. The Conference also encouraged States to share information and build voluntary guidance on how to take into account the risk of gender-based violence in national export control risk assessments, in line with the obligations of the Treaty. The theme of the Sixth Conference of States Parties to the ATT on countering diversion is particularly important and looking ahead, we should increase our focus on consolidation and implementation of the existing, robust Treaty provisions, including the financial provisions.

On the 20th anniversary of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, we expect the Fourth Review Conference in Oslo to review progress, reaffirm commitment and generate a push for further universalisation and improved implementation of obligations under the Convention with a view to achieving a world free of anti-personnel mines. The EU Council Conclusions adopted by our Ministers on 25 June 2019 set out our common objectives for the Review Conference with a view to strengthening the ban against anti-personnel mines.

Thank you, Mr. Chair