Statement by H.E. Sen. Benedetto Della Vedova,
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy
Conference on Disarmament - High Level Segment – 2 March 2016

Mr President,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to address also this year the Conference on Disarmament, which still represents the most important multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. I wish to reiterate Italy’s commitment to the work of this Conference and congratulate the Norwegian Presidency, whose mandate started last week. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary General, Mr. Michael Moeller, and to his team for their invaluable support to the work of the Conference.

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Mr President,

Major multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements have been negotiated within this Conference, and they still represent impressive accomplishments of the negotiating forum of Geneva, which contributes to making the world safer.

Today, after a deadlock of almost two decades, and in the face of the increasing tendency to bring disarmament negotiations outside the Conference, we fear that its relevance may be in danger. In our view, the CD remains a cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament machinery; preserving its primary role in promoting substantive negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation, and overcoming its current stalemate, therefore, remain paramount.

Last year the Conference did not agree on a negotiating mandate. Even though its activities were intense and, in our view, very useful, the adoption of a Programme of Work and the start of substantial work on key issues, during the current session, remain a major concern requiring flexibility from all sides.

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Mr President,

The NPT is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and an important element in the further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. We want to reaffirm our
commitment to create the conditions for a safer world for all without nuclear weapons, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT. Any further progress should be based on considering the three pillars of the NPT as mutually reinforcing. In this prospect we reaffirm our full support to the implementation of the 2010 Action Plan which includes concrete steps on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

While regretting that consensus could not be reached at the 9th Review Conference of the NPT, we look forward to actively participating in the new PrepCom cycle, which will start next year and bring us to the 2020 Review Conference. Productive work in the CD throughout this year would create momentum also for the NPT.

We all should be ambitious and take advantage of this period of time to advance in the implementation of 2010 Action Plan and bridge different positions for further progress in the achievement of the objectives of the Treaty.

In this context, we continue to support the convening of a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction - to be attended by all States of the region on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them - as decided by the 2010 Review Conference.

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Mr President,

We share the utmost concern about the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons’ use. Indeed, it is awareness of the continuing nuclear risks to humanity, and a desire for a peaceful world for future generations that underpin our efforts for effective progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Therefore, it is of paramount importance to participate constructively in all relevant discussions on nuclear disarmament with a clear focus on practical and effective measures. We should avoid creating shortcuts that are not contributing to the mutually reinforcing goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. A progressive approach towards nuclear disarmament represents a realistic way of reaching the Global Zero.

With this mind-set, we are participating in the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Nuclear Disarmament, established by UN General Assembly Resolution 70/33.

Mr President,

Despite its being criticized for failure to deliver concrete results, the disarmament community achieved two landmark successes in 2015: on the one hand, the agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the E3/EU+3 and Iran, and its recent implementation day; on the other, the successful conclusion of the first Conference of the States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty.

Last year witnessed also the fruitful continuation of the promising debate within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) on the issue of emerging technologies in the area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), which highly contributed towards greater understanding of the multiple aspects that these involve. We look forward to
continuing and deepening these discussions in the coming months, also with a view to the Review Conference of the CCW.

Italy remains indeed deeply committed to the full implementation of international instruments on conventional weapons, also by providing technical, material, and financial assistance to States in need, including those affected by mines, cluster munitions, and any kind of unexploded remnants of war. Our efforts also aim at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention by all the stakeholders involved in this domain. With this in mind, Italy, one of the major donors, has taken over the 2016 chair of the Mine Action Support Group whose first meeting was held last month in Geneva.

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Mr. President,

We regret that, in addition to some successes, we have to register some disturbing developments.

We condemn in the strongest terms the DPRK’s January nuclear test and the February 7th long-range missile launch. These actions constitute a serious violation of several UNSC resolutions, of North Korea’s obligations under the NPT and of the de facto international norm of a moratorium on nuclear tests, as well as further provocations and threats to international peace and security. We call on the DPRK to abandon all its existing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner, and to refrain from any further provocative actions. Furthermore, we urge the DPRK to return to the NPT and IAEA Safeguards at an early date as well as to sign and ratify the CTBT.

The complete ban on nuclear tests would be a crucial step for the elimination of nuclear weapons and, as such, a way to reach a stronger security for all. In this regard, Italy commends the new Ratifying States of the CTBT, one of the main accomplishments of this august Conference. Italy calls upon all States that have not yet done so and, in particular, the remaining eight Annex-2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, we urge all States to maintain all existing voluntary moratoria on nuclear weapons test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and to refrain from acts defeating the objective and purpose of the CTBT

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Mr President,

Within the Conference on Disarmament, the immediate start of negotiations without preconditions on a treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices remains a priority. At the same time, let me reiterate that we are ready to engage in productive work on all the CD’s agenda items. In this perspective, we continue to support any constructive initiative aimed at finding a possible way forward for the CD to resume its work.

Also, we warmly welcome the efforts to actively involve Civil Society in the discussions of this Assembly and we attach the utmost importance to their concrete and constructive contribution to the activities of the CD.

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Mr. President,
Italy will not spare any effort in supporting the work of this Assembly. Disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation are essential components of our foreign policy.

As a candidate to a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for the 2017-2018 term, Italy will further promote the disarmament agenda at the UN, as we have consistently been doing in all multilateral fora, including this Conference, the G7 and the EU.

Thank you Mr President.