



Statement by H. E. Ambassador Vinicio Mati
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 18 February 2014

Mr. Secretary General of the Conference on Disarmament,
Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

I have the privilege and honour to assume today the Presidency of this Assembly. It is my intention to do my utmost and to give a positive contribution to the work of this body.

Let me at the very outset express my warmest congratulations to my predecessor, Ambassador Eviatar Manor, and his team, for their strong engagement in finding possible ways to put the Conference on Disarmament in a position to overcome its current difficulties. I very much appreciated his pragmatic and realistic approach. He has been able to put the 2014 session of the Conference on the right track. It is my intention to go along the same path and to found my Presidency on the principle of continuity among the P6.

I would also like to thank the Acting Secretary-General for his active involvement and commitment to the Conference and the staff of the Secretariat for the invaluable support received so far.

Last but not least, my thanks also go to the other members of the group of the P6 for their cooperation and for their willingness to make the current session a welcome starting point on the road to the revitalization of the Conference.

Distinguished colleagues

This is not the first time that Italy is called to bear the responsibility of leading the work of this body.

My Country has been member of the Conference since its foundation in its current format and even before, when the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Committee was established in 1961.

The commitment to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation is an essential component of Italian foreign policy. Italy has long been active on various fronts that include the United Nations, the European Union and the G8, as well as in the context of major international conventions, coherently with its guiding principles, which are multilateralism as well as international cooperation.

In this framework, Italy is currently supporting the efforts of the international community in the Syrian Arab Republic, where one of the most important disarmament operations in the last ten years is ongoing.

This operation testifies, *inter alia*, the value and the effectiveness of one of the most important Conventions negotiated within these walls, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and shows how important the work that we are called to carry out can be for humankind and also the importance of the role that the Conference on Disarmament can play for a safer world.

In line with my Country's traditional engagement in this field, I will spare no effort to revitalize and strengthen the credibility of this forum.

In this respect I welcome and share the encouraging message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. His appeal to put the Conference back to work cannot go unheeded. The risk that the Conference on Disarmament will be marginalized and overcome by events is real and unacceptable. In order to avoid this, a certain amount of flexibility is required. I am convinced that flexibility and the protection of national interests are not contradictory. On the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing and both of them can be exercised at the same time.

I am quite confident that the time is ripe for the Conference to resume its activity even if the conditions for the adoption of a programme of work with a negotiating mandate are not there yet, as stated by the previous President and confirmed by my bilateral consultations.

Therefore, an innovative approach is required under the current situation.

From the discussions conducted until now and from my bilateral consultations, it seems to me that there is a general consensus on the so called dual track approach.

On the first track, namely the renewal of the mandate of the Informal Working Group, I did not hear strong oppositions but rather various constructive comments to the draft text that is on the table. The discussion is still open and after further consultations I hope that we will be able to circulate a draft decision as soon as possible. Anyhow, I would like to thank Ambassador Gallegos Chiriboga of Ecuador and Ambassador Woolcott of Australia for their willingness to continue to serve as co-chairs.

On the second track, the schedule of activities, we, the P6, are determined to work in a spirit of transparency, in close cooperation with the regional groups and with the full involvement of the whole membership. In the coming days we hope to deepen the consultations and have comments and reactions from the regional groups on the proposal circulated last week by the P6.

Distinguished colleagues,

As mentioned in my statement delivered at the first plenary meeting, it is of paramount importance for the Conference on Disarmament to resume its work and to meet the expectations that the international community had when it created this forum.

We have a great responsibility. Let us show that we are worthy of the trust we have been granted.

Thank you very much for your attention.