



Statement by Ambassador Vinicio Mati
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 22nd June 2017

Mr. Facilitator,

Following the questions you have proposed in order to structure our discussion, today I would like to make some comments on definitions, verification and legal and institutional arrangements.

Before doing so, let me express our appreciation for the constructive discussion we had during Tuesday's session, focusing on the scope of a possible Treaty and on the question of whether this should include existing stocks of fissile material.

On this critical point we continue to consider the Shannon mandate as a possible basis for discussions. In our interpretation, its structure, based on constructive ambiguity, makes the Mandate flexible enough to allow starting possible negotiations without prejudging the positions of those countries in favor of addressing the issue of existing stocks.

However we agree with those delegations that in the last session underlined the need to make an effort of greater flexibility and creativity in our approach on this critical point so as to contribute to unblocking the long-standing stalemate of the Conference.

In this vein we hope that this issue will be further discussed not only in the framework of the CD, but also in the context of the work of the High-Level Expert Preparatory Group.

Let me now move on to the issue of definitions.

DEFINITIONS

Italy believes that defining fissile material will be essential for the future Treaty.

In general terms, we are convinced that such a definition should be broad enough to make the future Treaty credible and effective, but not so extensive as to entail unacceptably complex and expensive verification procedures. Principally, this involves including under the scope of the Treaty the relevant Uranium and Plutonium isotopes. Keeping the definition of fissile material as close as possible to real-life conditions would, in our opinion, facilitate the negotiation, drafting and implementation of the Treaty.

An international definition of fissile material could be the one of “un-irradiated direct use fissile material”, currently employed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, in the implementation of Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols. Our work on this topic, therefore, should start from this.

VERIFICATION

The issue of verification is key, since ultimately the credibility of the Treaty will rest on its verification provisions and on how these will ensure compliance with its obligations. Also on this very sensitive issue, we welcome the work conducted by the GGE.

Verification should focus on declared production and facilities so as to allow for detecting and preventing the diversion of fissile materials to prohibited activities.

The verification regime should also provide credible assurances that no undeclared fissile material production occurs and no undeclared facilities exist.

In this regard, we believe that existing IAEA inspection standards could represent a useful reference for the Treaty negotiators.

We strongly support a non-discriminatory verification regime under which all States Parties are subjected to the same obligations.

At the same time, we recognize that verification methods, tools and techniques might have to be tailored to specific national contexts, which might entail different verification objectives and challenges. Also in this case the IAEA verification standards should be useful as a means to facilitate non-discrimination.

The drafting of the verification provisions of the Treaty will also have to deal with what is essentially a cost-benefit analysis. In practice, we should create a system that, at a reasonable cost, allows for comprehensive and credible results.

As you reminded us in your letter, different approaches to verification have been identified, namely the focused, the comprehensive and the hybrid approach. Each of these entails different benefits and drawbacks.

We believe that further discussions on this point by the Treaty negotiators will be necessary and we hope that the High Level Expert Preparatory Group can further elaborate on it and contribute to bridging the different views.

Further discussions will also be necessary on whether past production of fissile material should be accounted for and verified under a Treaty in order to provide a clear baseline on which to assess and verify compliance with its provisions.

In order to enable effective verification relating to production facilities, States Parties should be required to provide an initial declaration, to be updated in accordance with relevant provisions of the future Treaty.

Another important issue relates to the verification toolbox. In our view existing verification methods, tools and techniques employed in relevant multilateral and bilateral fora, most notably the IAEA, should form the core of the verification toolbox.

We are aware, however, that further analysis is needed in order to understand how these could apply to this Treaty's context.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

Mr. Facilitator,

let me finally outline Italy's basic position on the legal and institutional aspects of a future Treaty.

Concerning governance and decision-making, Italy supports a tripartite structure, with a Conference of State Parties as the main governing body, an executive council, and a secretariat.

We are deeply convinced that one of the main pillars of the Treaty will be its verification system.

In this regard, mindful of the need for maximum effectiveness in the implementation of the Treaty, we believe that the IAEA, whose expertise in this field is unquestioned, should be entrusted with the Treaty's verification tasks.

Mr. Facilitator,

Another point you have brought to our attention concerns how to deal with cases of non-compliance. On this very sensitive issue, Italy shares the view, expressed by the GGE experts, that States parties should have a relevant role in assessing these cases.

At the same time, we think that further reflection is needed to focus the proper role the UN bodies should play in this process.

Special care should also be given to the drafting of the rules on entry into force of the Treaty. In this vein, a balance must be struck to avoid on the one hand excessively restrictive rules (as in the case of the CTBT), and on the other hand too permissive ones, which could undermine the credibility of the Treaty.

Mr. Facilitator,

On the issue of the duration of the Treaty, we think that an indefinite or lengthy treaty duration would be best suited to the goals of non-proliferation, as well as disarmament.

Finally, serious consideration should be given to defining for the FMCT very rigorous withdrawal clauses.

Thank you, Mr. Facilitator