



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

Conference on Disarmament

Opening Statement

**delivered by Amb. Gianfranco Incarnato,
Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament**

Geneva, 19 January 2021

Mister President,

Thank you for giving me the floor. At the outset, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your responsibility as the first President of the 2021 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Please rest assured of my Delegation's full support and cooperation.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. Let me add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mister President,

The international scenario which is currently under our eyes remains deeply concerning, with heightened international and regional tensions. After having experienced COVID-19 and while we are still fighting this invisible enemy, we must not and cannot turn a blind eye on our collective responsibilities to enhance global security.

In many areas of the world, the pandemic has even exacerbated conflicts, with potentially dramatic consequences, especially for the civilian populations. We therefore immediately supported the Appeal launched last March by Secretary General Guterres for a "Global Cease-fire" in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflicts on lockdown, while focusing all together on the fight against the corona-virus.

Given the situation, we need to remember to ourselves the special responsibility that we bear in this august body. It is of utmost urgency that we act with determination. We need a collective renewed commitment to safeguard and even to strengthen the international disarmament architecture, guaranteeing its proper functioning, without entering the path of a new arms race in any domain.

Mister President,

2020 has been a difficult and complicated year, for many reasons. Also our work and the whole Disarmament machinery has suffered for the pandemic and we are grateful to you and to the Secretariat for having spared no effort to allow us to be here again, in a perhaps different set but always in a safe and inclusive format.

We should use the experience of 2020 as a lesson to improve our methods of work, to find new paths to cooperate, to put aside our differences in order to better defend our common interests for a more peaceful and secure world. The pandemic has shown even more clearly that effective multilateralism and a rules-based international system are the only path to success.

For these reasons, Italy reiterates its firm commitment for international cooperation and multilateralism as crucial tools for effective and long-term results in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We remain engaged in promoting these values, especially in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, whose role is crucial as it is the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

We fully understand and share the sense of frustration stemming from the long impasse in the Conference's work, which is regrettable. At the same time, we remain convinced that the CD is an indispensable and unique body in the toolbox of the disarmament community, even though its potential remains clearly unfulfilled nowadays.

It is up to us to act in order to preserve and relaunch its role. In this sense, we commend the cooperation set between the six Presidencies of this year and we are ready to support your efforts for the negotiation of a Program of Work. Moreover, we are very much in favour of the possibility to opt for a more pragmatic approach, without protracted procedural debates and with substantive work in so many important areas of discussion instead.

Mister President,

Italy reaffirms its firm commitment to disarmament and international security, in particular sharing the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. Our efforts for effective progress on nuclear disarmament are underpinned by our utmost concern for the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons' use.

In this regard, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), with its three mutually reinforcing pillars, remains the cornerstone of the international regime. It provides the only realistic legal framework to attain a world without nuclear weapons, in a way that promotes international stability and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all. Italy supports the efforts to use the remaining time in preparation of the Review Conference as an opportunity to build bridges between the States Parties and assess the substantial progress achieved so far in the framework of this historic Treaty. We especially acknowledge the increased attention given to risk reduction during the current NPT Review Cycle and we are glad to announce that Italy has decided to grant financial support to UNIDIR's programme on Nuclear Weapons Risk Reduction.

We stand ready to identify ways to support, uphold and preserve the Treaty in the difficult current environment. We call upon States that have not yet done so to join the NPT as non-nuclear weapon States, without delay and without conditions, and we call on all State Parties to the Treaty to implement all its provisions as well as commitments agreed by subsequent Review Conferences.

The prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is also one of our key priorities. We call on all States that have not yet done so, particularly the remaining eight Annex-2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay.

We continue to support the immediate commencement of negotiations within the CD on a Treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Pending its conclusion, we believe that all relevant States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

We also support the resumption of substantive discussions on Negative Security Assurances, within the context of a comprehensive and balanced program of work, with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all their aspects, not excluding an internationally legally binding instrument.

Mister President,

Nuclear weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities and we encourage them to seek further reductions in their nuclear arsenals, while enhancing transparency on their policies and doctrines. We are convinced that the goal of a nuclear weapon free world and an effective, verifiable, and irreversible nuclear disarmament can be attained only through an inclusive and progressive approach, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT, based on concrete and effective measures.

We welcome the strategic stability dialogue between the United States and the Russian Federation and we encourage them to seek further reductions to their arsenals, to use the remaining weeks to extend the New START Treaty and to engage on other arms control arrangements, including with a view to their widening in terms of scope.

Italy also values all initiatives undertaken in the field of nuclear disarmament verification, as important tools to build trust and confidence among nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States. In this regard, we support the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and welcome the work of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament.

Mister President,

In the context of the international efforts aimed at strengthening the non-proliferation architecture, Italy believes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action remains a key element. We remain convinced that the full implementation of the deal and of all provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 is still in the interest of all, as a key pillar of the global non-proliferation architecture and a crucial contribution to regional stability.

Italy is gravely concerned by Iranian further disengagement from the JCPoA and we urge Iran to return to full compliance without delay and to provide the IAEA with a full and timely cooperation with respect to all its safeguard-related commitments in order to clarify and resolve any pending issue. We are ready to support initiatives aimed at de-escalating the present tensions and restoring the JCPoA's integrity.

Also, the repeated ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, deeply concern us. DPRK's intention to retain and further develop its nuclear and ballistic programmes represent a threat that we cannot ignore. We urge the DPRK to take concrete steps towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, in which the IAEA needs to play a key role. We therefore call on Pyongyang to engage in credible negotiations in this respect and to give tangible proof of its asserted willingness to denuclearize by returning to the NPT, signing and ratifying the CTBT and resuming its collaboration with the IAEA. In the meantime, the international sanctions regime needs to remain in place and be effectively implemented, sustaining the negotiating process towards this goal.

Mister President,

Allow me to refer, in conclusion, to two important items of our agenda, which I will briefly touch upon jointly: the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the new types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons.

Italy strongly believes that technology development and science progress are critical for the well-being of humanity and have to be seen as an instrument to promote peace and sustainable growth. Working on disarmament, we have the great responsibility for assuring the proper framework to these developments, preventing any dangerous or negative use.

From this perspective, we are firmly committed to the long-term sustainability, safety and security of the outer space environment and we believe that a comprehensive and effective international regulatory environment should be elaborated and put in place.

We believe it is important to develop initiatives that will increase confidence and mutual trust between current and future actors. In this regard, we would like to highlight the importance of transparency and confidence building measures that can contribute to the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space and in the cyber space. We encourage further international cooperation to elaborate agreed principles of responsible behaviour.

Mister President,

Also in light of the increasing tendency to bring disarmament negotiations outside the CD, today more than ever we face the concrete risk of the marginalization of the Conference, and ultimately of its irrelevance. At the same time, the deteriorating security environment calls for renewed determination to advance our shared disarmament goals and adds a new sense of urgency to our efforts.

To conclude, Italy believes that greater interaction of the CD with civil society - broadly encompassing academia, NGOs, and the private sector - could make a key contribution to our work, helping to deep our technical discussions and substantively enriching our debate.

Thank you, Mister President.