



Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations

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

Let me express our congratulations to you for the way you are promoting a fruitful exchange of views in the context of this week's sessions of the OEWG. Also, let me thank the Mr. Tariq Rauf for his interesting and very useful presentation.

When coming to discuss about effective measures, other than the legal ones, that could contribute to taking forward multilateral disarmament, we cannot but recall that Italy subscribes to the working paper on “A progressive approach to a world free of nuclear weapons”, which we introduced yesterday with several other Countries. Indeed, the progressive approach that we herald – let me state it once again – is composed of a number of building blocks, consisting of parallel and simultaneous effective measures, which can be of a multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral or unilateral nature, and are mutually reinforcing.

In this regard, and in general terms, let me first of all recall that in our view continuing to look for practical, achievable steps as part of a full-spectrum approach to nuclear weapons will be key to our success in securing a world without them. Impractical and infeasible proposals, even though attractive in theory, will not be constructive, since they will not make us closer to our shared goal to reach "Global Zero".

In other words, we are fully determined to pursue nuclear disarmament via a realistic route. This requires a pragmatic approach that advances strategic stability and fosters conditions for further progress. Such approach has proven successful in the past and will continue to be in the future.

Mr. Chair,

This morning's topic requires us to discuss the issue of "Transparency measures related to the risks associated with existing nuclear weapons".

In this perspective, let me reiterate that the NPT, with its three mutually reinforcing pillars, remains the cornerstone of the international regime for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the unavoidable reference and the key source for all effective measures that we can adopt to advance these goals. Being convinced that disarmament and non-proliferation are

mutually reinforcing processes, Italy fully abides to its provisions and promotes its universalization.

In this framework, as a Non-Nuclear Weapon States, it would be not so easy for us to have a full knowledge of the risks associated with nuclear weapons and their functioning. As a consequence, it would complex for us to suggest – in a complete, in-depth and specific way - which risk-reduction measures could be adopted . We welcome, however efforts taken by some Nuclear Weapon Sates to enhance transparency of their stockpiles and we hope that others will follow suit. Indeed, we would have welcomed the participation of Nuclear Weapon States in our discussions, and we regret that this OEWG is not based on such an approach that would have allowed for their engagement.

Nonetheless, and while being convinced that nuclear weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities to carry on efforts aimed at achieving an effective, verifiable, and irreversible nuclear disarmament, we remain convinced that the inclusive processes needed to advance on this path can be based only on confidence and trust. Both nuclear weapon States and non-nuclear weapon States have to cooperate to ensure that these conditions are guaranteed.

From our perspective, a large spectrum of practical and effective measures for the enhancement of transparency and the reduction of risks associated with nuclear weapons are already embodied in relevant actions of the 2010 NPT Action Plan. Most of them are listed in the working paper on the progressive approach I have mentioned before.

In this framework, we believe that it will be essential that nuclear-weapon States undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional, and multilateral measures. As I had already the occasion to say in my previous statement, we welcome the indications of progress in implementing the New START Treaty by the Russian Federation and the US, and strongly encourage them to continue their efforts.

Another effective practical measure is the reduction by nuclear-weapon States of the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines, and policies, as well as a further reduction of the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security.

All these steps cannot but contribute to a reduction of the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, as well as of intentional detonations.

Mr. Chair,

We remain convinced of the fundamental importance of every effort by Governments, the UN, other international and regional organizations and civil society aimed at increasing confidence, improving transparency and developing efficient verification capabilities related to nuclear disarmament.

Increasing transparency measures, particularly among nuclear weapon States, in relation to their nuclear arsenals and fissile material holdings, including higher degrees of specificity on nuclear warheads reductions, as well as improving the quality and frequency of reports to enhance transparency is in our view another effective measure we can advocate for.

Developing verification capabilities will be essential, especially when considering that verification challenges will increase as far as nuclear arsenals are reduced on the way to a world free of nuclear weapons. In this vein, we recall the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, in which Italy is fully engaged.

Mr. Chair,

Since nuclear deterrence has been widely discussed in the previous sessions, and being a member of a military alliance that relies on this strategic concept, let me point out that NATO – as already underlined by other Allies - has dramatically reduced the number, types and readiness of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe and its reliance on nuclear weapons in its strategy. The Alliance is resolved to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in accordance with the goals of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in a way that promotes international stability, and is based on the principle of undiminished security for all.

However, we think that as long as nuclear weapons exist, many countries will continue to rely on nuclear deterrence and on extended deterrence to help preventing nuclear attacks and coercion. Nuclear deterrence and nuclear disarmament therefore, are, for the time being, complementary.

Mr. Chair;

Banning nuclear weapons by itself will not guarantee their elimination; progress towards the shared goal of global zero will require States focusing on common ground and working together to prevent the use of nuclear weapons and their proliferation, as well as promoting effective nuclear disarmament through the progressive approach we adopt.

There is a trade-off between theoretical aspirations and reality, which is the same alternative we face between ambitions and effectiveness. We choose to be effective, even though this implies that progress towards our shared goal is not as fast as we wish it could be. As the Japanese Ambassador said, the progressive approach, which could appear as a detour, is the real shortcut towards nuclear disarmament. We hope that this approach will be appropriately reflected in the final report.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.