



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,

First of all, let me thank Dr. Casey-Maslen for the interesting and thought-provoking presentation he delivered this morning.

Italy fully shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. This goal is enshrined in the NPT, whose full implementation is a firm priority for us. Indeed, in our view, the NPT remains the cornerstone of the international regime for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as its essential legal foundation.

We firmly believe that Art. VI of the Treaty contains a very clear legal obligation. It calls on State Parties to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament, as well as on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. Art. VI, therefore, contains an obligation to achieve a precise result – nuclear disarmament – and an obligation to achieve this result by adopting a particular conduct, the pursuit of negotiations in good faith.

As a consequence, we are fully convinced that there is no legal gap to fill. On the contrary, the NPT already provides a solid and robust legal framework – the only realistic one - to pursue the security of a world without nuclear weapons. It is the source of the overarching norms on which all nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures are based.

In this regard, let me stress once again that when we discuss the effective legal measures that are needed to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, the first and fundamental one to be considered is the universalization of the NPT and its full implementation, as well as the full implementation of the 2010 NPT Action Plan and the 13 practical steps to disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

In this regard, we believe that a large spectrum of practical and effective measures, both legal and non-legal, can be identified to implement article VI of the NPT.

With a specific reference to legal measures, which are the focus of today's panel, Italy's main priority remains the immediate commencement of negotiations, within the CD, of a Treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices without preconditions. Pending entry into force of such a Treaty, we believe that nuclear-weapon States should declare and maintain a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The prompt entry into force of the CTBT will provide the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime with another core "block". In the meantime, continued respect by nuclear-weapon States of the de facto complete moratorium on nuclear weapon tests remains essential.

Continued engagement by nuclear-weapon States to fully respect their commitments with regard to security assurances, and to extend them if they have not yet done so, will be fundamental.

Also, let me recall that the establishment of further nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the region concerned, will highly contribute to our common goal. For Italy, the establishment of a weapon of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East remains a priority.

Mr. Chair,

Some effective legal measures for the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world are already in place. In some cases, we can act in order to further strengthen, reinforce, and universalize them.

Among these, effective legal measures that deserve our attention relate to strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, including universal adherence to and implementation of comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols; universalization of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear terrorism; continued support to the practical implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and following, related decisions.

I would also like to underline that nuclear-weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities in the process to achieve nuclear disarmament. Further efforts on their part to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional, and multilateral measures, will be essential. In this regard, we welcome the indications of progress in implementation of the New START Treaty by the Russian Federation and the US, and strongly encourage them to continue with their efforts.

The commencement of bilateral, plurilateral or multilateral nuclear weapons reduction negotiations could constitute a further, effective legal measure.

Mr. Chair,

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate that, as my delegation stated last week, we fully share the concern over the devastating impacts of nuclear weapon explosions on human beings as well as on the environment. It is indeed this concern with the dramatic and devastating humanitarian consequences associated with nuclear weapons' use that underpins our action on disarmament, non-proliferation as well as on nuclear security.

At the same time, we think that as long as nuclear weapons exist, many countries will continue to rely on nuclear deterrence to help preventing nuclear attacks and coercion.

Banning nuclear weapons by itself will not guarantee necessarily 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 described in the working paper Italy has presented with 22 other Countries. We do not believe that any short-cut can result in an effective, verifiable, and irreversible nuclear disarmament.

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. The progressive approach, which could appear as being slow, is the only effective path to nuclear disarmament. We hope that this approach will be appropriately reflected in the final report.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.