



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 30 June 2020

**delivered by Mr. Tancredi Francese,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

Mister President,

Let me congratulate you on the assumption of your responsibility as the President of the Conference on Disarmament and let me especially commend you and your team – with the precious support of 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. Please rest assured of our Delegation's full support and cooperation.

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

Mister President,

At the opening session of this year, we have already stated how deeply concerning is the current international scenario, with heightened international and regional tensions. Today, after having experienced such a global catastrophe as it is the present pandemic, we must not and cannot turn a blind eye on our collective responsibilities towards the international security. It is of utmost urgency that we act with determination, to safeguard and even to strengthen the international disarmament architecture, without enter the path of a new arms race in any domain.

Also in light of these reasons, Italy fully supports the UN Secretary General's call for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world and is strongly in favor of referring to this appeal in all relevant *fora*. It is time to put armed conflicts on lockdown, while focusing all together on the fight against the coronavirus.

Mister President,

2020 was supposed to be a special year for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, especially for the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the 50th anniversary of the NPT, the 45th anniversary of the entry into force of the BWC, with a calendar full of activities for our common work.

We should still have the opportunity to mark this year as a different one, but not because of the tragic events caused by this invisible enemy called COVID-19.

Let's mark this year as the moment when our countries truly realized that effective multilateralism and a rules-based international system are the only path to success, the only tools for effective and long-term results. Let's remember this page of the history as the moment when, having in mind the public and global challenges posed by the coronavirus, we put our differences aside and were able to build on our common interest for peace and security.

Mister President,

New and complex challenges lie ahead for the disarmament regime, namely the risk of nuclear proliferation cases, the deplorable use of chemical weapons and the need to improve biosecurity and biosafety. Not to mention some important humanitarian aspects linked to non-international armed conflicts, the proliferation of non-state armed groups and the growing difficulty of distinguishing between combatants and civilians, terrorism and cyber-attacks.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, could play a crucial role against these challenges. We should not lose another opportunity here. Even if in the remaining months it will be difficult to agree on a Programme of work, we could use our time – as the Australian Presidency so wisely began to do – to cross bridges and get ready to finally break the deadlock in the Conference's work. If such an impasse was simply regrettable some months ago, it is absolutely unacceptable now.

Thank you, Mister President.