



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - New York

First Committee of the 76th UN General Assembly

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Stefano Stefanile, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations

New York, 7 October 2021

Mister Chair,

I would like to start by wishing you and the members of the Bureau a successful holding of this annual session of the First Committee. Rest assured of the full support of the Italian delegation.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

In recent years we have witnessed a progressive weakening of multilateralism which, together with heightened international and regional tensions, make the international scenario currently under our eyes deeply concerning. We are facing problems that we cannot solve on our own and, in many areas of the world, the pandemic has even exacerbated conflicts, with dramatic consequences especially for the civilian populations. We cannot turn a blind eye on our collective responsibilities to enhance global security.

Effective multilateralism and a rules-based international system are the only tools to preserve the results achieved so far and further advance relevant processes. It is of utmost urgency that we act with determination to safeguard and to strengthen the international architecture on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, so preventing a new arms race in any domain. For this reason, Italy reiterates its support for the UN disarmament machinery and its three mutually reinforcing fora, which remain central and irreplaceable.

Italy reaffirms its firm commitment for 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.

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. 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 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. 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. In this vein, we welcome the extension of the New START Treaty and the progress of the strategic stability dialogue between the United States and Russia.

A main priority for Italy remains the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). 25 years after its opening for signature, the Treaty represents a landmark agreement on the path towards disarmament and non-proliferation. As a staunch supporter of the CTBT, and in line with its role as Article XIV co-Coordinator for the upcoming two-year period, Italy urges all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining eight Annex-2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay. In the meantime, we call upon all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear test explosions and to refrain from any action that could undermine the objective and purpose of the Treaty.

The immediate commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is also of crucial importance to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Pending the conclusion of such a treaty, all relevant States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

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. The full implementation of the deal and of all provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 is crucial for regional and international security. We are gravely concerned by Iranian disengagement from the JCPoA and we urge Iran to fully implement its obligations under the JCPoA without delay and to recede from its activities related to uranium enrichment, stockpiling of nuclear material, together with the further development, at a faster pace, of technical capabilities. We call on all participants in the Vienna talks to spare no efforts in addressing and resolving the current issues through dialogue as soon as possible. At the same time, we urge Iran 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.

The repeated ballistic missile launches, including the most recent ones, by the DPRK undermine regional and international peace and security and are a matter of grave concern. We urge the DPRK to refrain from further provocations and 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 comply with relevant UNSC Resolutions, to return to the NPT, to sign and ratify the CTBT and to resume 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.

Italy remains strongly committed to supporting the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the work of the OPCW. We strongly condemn any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable the perpetrators of chemical attacks. We firmly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force and urge Syria to take all the measures required.

Italy reiterates its concerns for the poisoning of Alexey Navalny in Russia by a chemical nerve agent of the "Novichok" group in August 2020 and urges the Russian Federation to transparently clarify the responsibility of the incident and to cooperate with the OPCW on the issue.

The pandemic has shown how important is to improve biosecurity and biosafety. We attach great importance to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), as a fundamental component of the disarmament architecture, and to the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism. In a context of fast-paced scientific and technological developments, we should use the upcoming Review Conference to strengthen the BTWC and endow it with appropriate mechanisms to assess the potential impact of such developments.

Italy is deeply concerned by the increasing risk of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of non-state actors, particularly in relation to terrorist acts. We strongly support full and universal implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540 and its follow on Resolutions, as well as of all other relevant international instruments.

Italy is extremely concerned by the indiscriminate humanitarian and socio-economic impacts of anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war, as well as IEDs, especially on civilians and in populated areas. We believe international cooperation and victim assistance are key components of our commitment for a world free of mines and we believe a comprehensive approach is needed, looking at mine action as a component of our efforts for promoting sustainable development and international security.

Furthermore, looking at the protection of civilians and having in mind the data on armed violence, we believe in the importance of countering illicit arm transfers. For this reason, we call for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and for the full implementation of all its provisions.

Italy also strongly and actively supports the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and its Annexed Protocols. We attach great importance to their universalization, to full compliance with their provisions, and to the development of any possible synergy among them. In view of the upcoming Review Conference, we welcome the on-going work of the GGE on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. Bearing in mind the importance of applying IHL to all weapons systems, we believe it is crucial to reach consensus on the possible elements of a normative and operational framework.

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 and security, 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. Italy remains fully committed to preventing an arms race in outer space and we encourage further international cooperation to elaborate agreed principles of responsible behaviour.

Along the same line, ICTs and the Internet are among the greatest human achievements, offering unprecedented opportunities. We support all efforts towards a global, open, free, stable and secure cyberspace where international law, including fundamental freedoms and human rights fully apply. In this vein, Italy supports the proposal to establish a Programme of Action on advancing responsible behaviour in cyberspace as a necessary complementary initiative for an action-oriented agenda with a specific focus on capacity building.

Across all these issues, Italy believes that interaction with civil society – broadly encompassing academia, NGOs, and the private sector – is a key element of our work.

Moreover, Italy promotes policies and approaches that enable the full empowerment of women, taking into due regard the gendered impacts of armed violence and the importance of including women in disarmament negotiations and peacebuilding programs.

Thank you, Mister Chair.