



Permanent Mission of Italy
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General Debate

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Leonardo Bencini,
Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference on Disarmament**

New York, 4 October 2022

Mister Chair,

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your appointment as Chair of this Committee. I am pleased to assure you of my Delegation's full support and cooperation.

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

Mister Chair,

International peace and security depend on respect for international law by all UN Member States and the international community as a whole. Effective multilateralism and a rules-based international system are the only path to success. For this reason, Italy reiterates its support for the UN disarmament machinery and its three mutually reinforcing fora, which remain central and irreplaceable.

Against our best efforts to enhance global security and to strengthen the international architecture of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, last February the Russian Federation, a major nuclear power, a permanent member Security Council, has attacked a neighboring country, so violating the values and rules on which international security and civil coexistence between countries has been based for decades.

We were convinced that we would no longer have to witness wars of aggression in Europe. Instead, the aggression of Ukraine by Russia and the resulting crises - food, energy, economic - put our collective ideals at risk as has rarely happened since the end of the Cold War. These crises join the other great challenges of our times and amplify their costs, especially for the weakest. While the responsibilities of the conflict are clear - and of only one side - it is our collective responsibility to find answers to these problems with urgency, determination, effectiveness. We reiterate our condemnation of Russia's irresponsible nuclear rhetoric. It will not distract or dissuade us from supporting Ukraine, for as long as necessary.

For us it is not possible to ignore the consequences of the current international scenario on our debate today and on the work we do every day here in New York, in Geneva or in Vienna. Working on disarmament and international security, we bear a special responsibility and we must react to this attack on peaceful coexistence between our nations, we must react with multilateralism and by reaffirming the values underlying this Assembly, namely respect for international law and international cooperation.

As stated by our Prime Minister Draghi in this room only a few weeks ago "A world divided into blocs, crossed by rigid ideological demarcations and military oppositions, does not generate development, it does not solve problems. We must maintain our identities, but conduct international relations in a responsible, legal, peaceful way. This principle must apply to all the crises we face: from Ukraine, to the recent clashes in the Caucasus, to situations of instability in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, to the tensions in the Indo-Pacific."

Mister Chair,

Italy fully shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. A goal that can only be attained through a progressive approach, based on concrete measures, resulting in an effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. 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 Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), with its three mutually reinforcing pillars, remains the cornerstone of the international regime. It is the only realistic legal framework to pursue a world free of nuclear weapons, in a way that promotes international stability and undiminished security for all. We deeply regret that at the recent Review Conference it was not possible to adopt a final outcome, due to Russia blocking consensus. Although the text embodied a compromise that did not meet our expectations completely, it would have represented an important milestone for the non-proliferation regime, in particular in the current strategic context. Nevertheless, we reaffirm the importance of the legal obligations enshrined in the NPT and we call upon States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States, without delay and without conditions, and we call on all States Parties to implement the provisions of the Treaty as well as all commitments agreed by subsequent Review Conferences.

Nuclear weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities and, while welcoming the reductions made so far by most of them, we encourage them to seek further reductions in their nuclear arsenals. We are convinced that the goal of world free of nuclear weapons 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.

An important step in this direction should be the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). As a staunch supporter of the Treaty and in line with its current role as Article XIV co-Coordinator, Italy urges all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining eight Annex-2 States, to sign and ratify it without further delay. In the meantime, we call upon all States to respect the moratorium on nuclear tests and to refrain from any action that could undermine the objective and purpose of the Treaty.

We also continue to support the immediate commencement of negotiations on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Pending its conclusion, all relevant States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Mister Chair,

We remain deeply concerned by the severe difficulties that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear programme is still experiencing. We urge Iran to return to implement its obligations under the JCPOA without delay and to comply fully with its safeguards obligations.

Likewise, we urge the DPRK to refrain from further provocations, including the increasing number of ballistic missile launches and the recent approval of a domestic law codifying the right to launch preemptive nuclear strikes. We call the DPRK to take concrete steps towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and to return to full compliance with the NPT.

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.

Mister Chair,

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. Italy believes that international cooperation and victim assistance are keys 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.

We welcome the completion, earlier this year, of the negotiations on the text of a political declaration on EWIPA. 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 and, for this reason, we call for the universalization of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the full implementation of all its provisions.

Italy 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. 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 and to the prevention of an arms race in this domain. We encourage further international cooperation to elaborate agreed principles of responsible behavior.

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 behavior in cyberspace as a necessary complementary initiative for an action-oriented agenda with a specific focus on capacity building.

To conclude, Mister Chair,

I am particularly honored that the States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention have agreed to designate me to preside over the upcoming ninth Review Conference.

The pandemic has shown how important is to improve biosecurity and biosafety. Italy attaches the greatest importance to the BWC, as a fundamental component of the disarmament architecture. In a context of fast-paced scientific and technological developments, we should use the upcoming Review Conference to strengthen the Convention and endow it with appropriate mechanisms to assess the potential impact of such developments.

In the year when we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention, every possible effort should be made to and ensure its universality, together with its full and effective implementation.

Mister Chair,

Across all these issues, Italy believes that greater interaction with civil society – broadly encompassing academia, NGOs, and the private sector – could make a key contribution to our work.

Moreover, Italy promotes policies and approaches that enable the full empowerment of women and take into due regard the gendered impacts of armed violence and the importance of including women in disarmament negotiations and peacebuilding programs. Italy has so far adopted three National Action Plans to implement UNSC Resolution 1325 that, for the first time, addressed not only the disproportionate impact of war on women, but also their pivotal role in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in the achievement of sustainable peace.

We all are required of special efforts to respond to threats to international peace and security and it is important that we look together at our common interests to address global challenges. Given the heightened tensions, we must be careful not to enter the path of a new arms race in any domain. Instead, we need a collective renewed commitment towards preserving international institutions and instruments, and guaranteeing their proper functioning.

Thank you, Mister Chair.