



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - New York

First Committee of the 77th UN General Assembly
Nuclear Weapons

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

New York, 14 October 2022

Mister Chair,

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

Mister Chair,

Italy fully shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons and, in this regard, we restate our strong commitment to preserve and strengthen the disarmament and non-proliferation framework.

In this context, the ongoing unjustified and unprovoked aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine is a blatant violation of the UN Charter, of international law and the rules-based international order. We also condemn Russia's irresponsible use of nuclear rhetoric; the betrayal of the security assurances given at the time of Ukraine's accession to the NPT and the threat posed to Ukraine's nuclear infrastructures.

We also consider the constitutional change in Belarus to renounce to its nuclear-free zone status as an unacceptable attempt to re-define the rules-based European security architecture.

Mister Chair,

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, it would have represented an important milestone, in particular in the current strategic context. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the international disarmament regime, with its three mutually reinforcing pillars. The Treaty must be upheld and preserved. We therefore invite States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States, without delay and without conditions.

The NPT provides the only realistic legal framework to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, in a manner that promotes international stability consistent with the principle of undiminished security for all. This goal can only be achieved through a gradual approach, by taking effective measures – pursuant to Article VI of the NPT – that involve all the stakeholders in a consensus-based perspective.

We are striving for true progress on nuclear disarmament because of our deep concern over the potentially catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. One measure we are pursuing is the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The lack of progress on the CTBT should be of concern to the entire international community. As a staunch supporter of the Treaty in line with its current role as Article XIV co-Coordinator, Italy invites all States that have not yet done so, particularly the remaining eight Annex-2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay. In the meantime, we call upon all States to continue to respect the voluntary moratorium on nuclear test explosions and to refrain from any action that could undermine the objective and purpose of the Treaty.

Another key priority is for the Conference on Disarmament to immediately start negotiations for a Treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Such a treaty would be a valuable new element of the international security architecture, which is under growing pressure today. Pending the conclusion of such a treaty, all States should abide by a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

We also support the resumption of substantive discussions on Negative Security Assurances, within the context of a comprehensive and balanced program of work, with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all their aspects, not excluding an international legally binding instrument. In this regard, we also wish to reiterate our support for the establishment of Zones Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Italy values all initiatives undertaken in the field of nuclear disarmament verification, as important tools to build trust and confidence among nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States. In this respect, we strongly support the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and welcome the work ongoing within the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament.

We stress the relevance of risk reduction, which can contribute to alleviating tensions and building the necessary trust and confidence, such as transparency and dialogue on nuclear doctrines and postures, military-to-military dialogues, hotlines, “accident measures agreements” and notification of exercises, missile launch notifications and other data exchange agreements, consistently with the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan.

Nuclear-weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities for the implementation of Art. VI of the NPT. While Italy welcomed the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to extend the New START Treaty and to establish a bilateral Security Dialogue, and P5 efforts, we continue to call upon the nuclear states with the largest arsenals to take concrete steps towards effective nuclear disarmament through further reductions and to actively engage in strengthening the entire disarmament architecture.

Mister Chair,

The proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to pose a major threat to international security. The IAEA's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, together with the Additional Protocol, remains a fundamental insurance for our security and a core component of the NPT. The Agency's system of safeguards is crucial to ensure the peaceful character of nuclear activities and it is an indispensable means to preserve and foster global security.

As far as the efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation architecture are concerned, Italy continues to believe that relaunching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action must remain a key priority for the international community. We call on Iran to comply fully with its safeguards obligations and to refrain from further activities related to uranium enrichment, in violation of the JCPoA, as well as to continue to work with the IAEA to ensure the correctness and completeness of the required declarations. In parallel, we call on all Parties involved in Vienna talks to continue to invest in dialogue and spare no efforts to revive the deal.

Italy expresses grave concern at the increasing number of ballistic missile launches by the DPRK, including two ICBMs, as it seriously jeopardizes international security and the global non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, we consider unacceptable the recent approval of a domestic law codifying the right to launch preemptive nuclear strikes. We thus call on the DPRK to engage in good faith in diplomatic talks for a complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization. This encompasses returning to the NPT, joining the CTBT, resuming a transparent cooperation with the IAEA, refraining from conducting nuclear tests. In the meantime, the international sanctions regime must remain in place and be effectively implemented.

Thank you, Mister Chair.