



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva

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

Geneva, 3 March 2022

Madame President,

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks in its national capacity, with reference to agenda items 2 (prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters) and 4 (effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons).

Italy, together with its EU partners and allies, has made its position clear all along throughout this entire crisis: the unprovoked aggression decided by the Russian leadership is a blatant and outrageous violation of the most basic principles of international law and the UN Charter, of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and of fundamental humanitarian rules and principles, and, as such, it has to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. We also strongly condemn the involvement of Belarus in this aggression against Ukraine and reiterate our call on it to refrain from such action and to abide by its international obligations. We stand firmly in support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and in full solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Madame President,

Just a couple of weeks ago, Amb. Li Song – who we would like to thank for his patient efforts on steering the work of the Conference at the beginning of this year's Session – closed his Presidency with some remarks that I find wise. Referring to the interesting debate we had on how to advance the work of the CD in light of the current international security landscape, he said, “It is widely recognized that the Conference does not operate in a vacuum or can be detached from international political and security realities”.

We therefore demand today that Russia immediately ceases its hostilities, unconditionally withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders and territorial waters.

A few days ago, the UN Secretary General said, "We are facing a tragedy for Ukraine, but also a major regional crisis with potentially disastrous implications for us all. The mere idea of a nuclear conflict is simply inconceivable. Nothing can justify the use of nuclear weapons." This is consistent with the declaration that the Presidents of the P5 made just two months ago on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. We welcome the intention of the P5 to continue working to prevent a new nuclear arms race, as well as to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, and increase mutual understanding and confidence. And we encourage the P5 to further pursue constructive dialogue.

Madame President,

Something particularly affects us and relates to the impact and the consequences of the conflict on the civil population: the news and the images we are watching in these days show us that the price of the war is being paid, once again, by the most vulnerable. Russia's actions are causing enormous human suffering and triggering a humanitarian disaster. As the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, highlighted "the lives of millions of civilians are at stake".

Deploring the tragic loss of life and human suffering, Italy stands in solidarity with all those whose lives have been affected by the war waged by the Russian Federation. Their rights must be upheld at all times, and accountability for any violation or abuse of these rights guaranteed.

This is the moment when democratic communities have to stand up and show their strong solidarity to all women, men and children who are suffering because of this unacceptable aggression. Italy is and will play its part for a strong and united humanitarian initiative.

Working on disarmament, we hold a special responsibility and cannot keep silent in front of such warring developments. Every part in the conflict has to abide to International Humanitarian Law, avoiding destructive impacts on civilian populations, both in direct and indirect terms, including strengthening the protection of essential infrastructure, healthcare services, and cultural heritage. Nothing can justify the indiscriminate use of weapons against civilians and we are especially concerned by the alleged use of cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines.

International Law and International Humanitarian Law stands valid and we welcome the recent decision of the International Criminal Court Prosecutor, Karim A.A. Khan, to proceed opening an investigation on the situation in Ukraine. It is of particular concern to read that he sees a reasonable basis to believe that both alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed in Ukraine.

On this aspect, as for the implementation of and the compliance with any international instruments, our position has not changed. Any actor that fail to act in accordance with its international obligations and commitments will face consequences. There can be no impunity and the perpetrators of international crimes will be held accountable.

Madame President,

Even in difficult times, diplomacy cannot stop. Actually, it is under the most difficult circumstances that we need to redouble our efforts. We cannot afford the price of a stalemate in the CD anymore, and when it comes to nuclear disarmament, the Conference still has a crucial role to play.

Let us be very clear, there is only one possibility to do so: silence the guns and start listening to each other in good faith. It is up to us to act in order to preserve and relaunch the role of the Conference.

It is up to us to recognize that it will be difficult to make any progress by going backward to old approaches. Instead, our work needs to adapt to new circumstances, to recognize the new layers of risk. We stand ready to work with you on the basis of the Decision on the work of the Conference for this year and look forward to participating in the discussion of the five Subsidiary Bodies. In good faith and sparing no efforts to contribute to a more co-operative atmosphere.

Thank you Madame President.