



*Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale*

**STATEMENT BY H.E. ON. EMANUELA DEL RE
DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT - HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT
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Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Conference on Disarmament. Let me start by reiterating Italy's full commitment to the work and mission of this Body and expressing my delegation's full support to the President, the distinguished Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary General, Mr. Michael Moeller, and to his team for their invaluable support to the work of the Conference.

Mr President,

A rules-based international system and effective multilateralism are of the utmost importance to address global challenges and threats to international peace and security. We underline the fundamental need for a collective renewed commitment towards preserving international institutions and instruments, and guaranteeing their proper functioning.

We need the same determination in the fields of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, in order to preserve the results achieved so far and further advance relevant processes, thus working together to enhance global security.

In this regard, the UN disarmament machinery and its three mutually reinforcing fora remain central. The Conference on Disarmament was created as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Major multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements have been negotiated within this Conference, which still represent impressive accomplishments, and have provided concrete contributions for a safer world.

We remain convinced that the Conference on Disarmament is an indispensable and unique body in the toolbox of the disarmament community, even though its potential remains clearly unfulfilled nowadays. We fully understand and share the sense of frustration stemming from the long impasse in the Conference's work.

We also view with concern the increasing tendency to bring disarmament negotiations outside the Conference on Disarmament. Today, more than ever, we face the concrete risk of the marginalization of the Conference, and ultimately of its irrelevance. It is up to us to act in order to preserve and relaunch its role, and ensure that it fulfils the purpose for which it was established.

Italy appreciated the constructive and substantive discussions held last year in the five subsidiary bodies to reach an understanding on the areas of commonalities, deepen technical discussions and broaden areas of agreement and consider effective measures, including legal instruments for negotiations.

The adoption of four substantive reports for the first time in years was an important step forward and we firmly believe that, this year, we should build and expand on this solid basis.

Mr President,

Italy fully shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons and is firmly committed to disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation as essential components of its foreign policy. 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 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the international regime, with its three mutually reinforcing pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Italy still believes that the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan remains a very good basis to progress in each of these.

The upcoming Third Preparatory Committee of the 2020 NPT Review Conference and the Review Conference itself provide opportunities to assess the substantial progress achieved so far in the framework of this historic instrument, as well as to identify ways to support, uphold and preserve it in the difficult current environment.

In view of these crucial events, we would also like to reiterate our support for the convening - on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned - of a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Mr. President,

The NPT 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. Such a goal can be attained only through a progressive approach based on effective measures, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT, involving all relevant actors, in a perspective based on the research for consensus.

Among these measures, the prompt entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of our key priorities. We call on all States that have not yet done so, particularly the remaining eight Annex-2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay.

We continue to support the immediate commencement of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a Treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the report of the High Level Expert Preparatory Group established by UNGA Resolution 71/259. We believe it would be important to build on the Group's work and enrich with its fruitful inputs our negotiations of such a treaty within the CD. Pending its conclusion, we believe that all relevant 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 internationally legally binding instrument.

Italy also 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 regard, we support the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification and welcome the work of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

Nuclear weapon States bear fundamental responsibilities for the implementation of Art. VI of the NPT. While welcoming the reductions made so far by most of them, we encourage them to seek further reductions in their nuclear arsenals. We greatly welcomed the announcement by the Russian Federation and the United States that they met the central limits of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in February 2018. We call on them to extend the Treaty and to pursue further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, verification activities and reporting.

Mr. President,

We are aware of the extremely positive results we can achieve when diplomacy works. After a deeply troubling 2017, when DPRK's nuclear and missile tests threatened international peace and security, as well as the non-proliferation regime, in the first half of 2018 high-level diplomatic efforts brought about positive developments. We strongly hope that the high-level summit between the US and DPRK scheduled to take place in the next few days will set a concrete basis for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We strongly believe that international sanctions against the DPRK must remain in force and be implemented to sustain the current negotiating process. A durable collective commitment remains necessary.

In the context of international efforts aimed at strengthening the non-proliferation architecture, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action remains a key element. We firmly believe that the international community needs to remain committed to a full and effective implementation of the Plan of Action, as long as Iran continues to strictly abide by its nuclear-related commitments. We also reiterate the importance of a full and effective implementation of Resolution 2231.

Italy remains 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.

In this respect, we support the strengthening of the 1540 Committee mechanism to increase national capacities in the implementation of non-proliferation measures and we welcome the positive outcome of the Review of the UN Resolution 1540 regime, as embodied in UN Security Council resolution n. 2325.

Italy also remains deeply committed to the full implementation of international instruments on conventional weapons and to international efforts to address their negative humanitarian, socio-economic and security impacts. We have ratified all the disarmament and arms control instruments which ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately. These include the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and the Conventions banning anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions.

We also devote significant material, technical and financial resources to the implementation of these instruments, most notably in the field of humanitarian demining, with a particular focus on victim assistance.

We have also ratified or joined all instruments aiming to counter the humanitarian, social and economic impacts of illicit, unregulated, or irresponsible transfers of conventional arms, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms, the International Tracing Instrument, and the Firearms Protocol.

Across all of these issues, 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.

Before concluding, Mr. President,

My Country stands ready to work with all partners to advance disarmament goals and values, in the Conference on Disarmament and in all other relevant fora, starting from the upcoming Third Preparatory Committee of the 2020 Review Conference of the NPT.

In the framework of the CD, we support the efforts of the Presidency in order to reach an agreement that allows the immediate resumption of substantial discussions. In order to build upon the important results achieved last year within the five subsidiary bodies, we believe it would be important to further focus the discussions, with the aim of identifying areas ripe for the elaboration of common approaches, including legally-binding instruments.

Finally, Italy believes that greater interaction of the CD with civil society – broadly encompassing academia, NGOs, and the private sector – could make a key contribution to our work, as testified, for example, by the very useful input provided by experts to last year's subsidiary bodies, which helped deepen our technical discussions and substantively enriched our debate.

Thank you, Mr President.