



## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr President,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to have this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament today.

One hundred and ten years ago, major and small powers met in The Hague to discuss matters of war and peace. They adopted a series of conventions to reduce military conflict. The Second Hague Peace Conference, as it became known, was commemorated here in Geneva last week. And let me use this opportunity to thank the Russian CD Presidency for organizing this event.

The participants of the Hague Conferences recognised the importance of dialogue and cooperation. In our

globalised world, this understanding is needed as much today as it was then.

Consider the DPRK's nuclear testing and other provocations.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Cyberattacks.

The threat of terrorism.

The risk of nuclear terrorism; the use of dirty bombs.

Geopolitical divisions abound, hampering our efforts to reach common solutions. But we must never lose sight of the fact that none of us can address today's threats alone. They affect the international community as a whole. And the international community must confront them together.

That's why I want to devote my remarks today to the importance of multilateralism. My country seeks and promotes international cooperation on all matters of common interest. Disarmament was in the common interest in 1907, and it still is in 2017.

### **[Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty]**

Multilateralism has proven its value time and time again. It is not a luxury for good days. The Non-Proliferation Treaty is a clear example. In the past, we anticipated the possibility of dozens of nuclear weapon

states and constant crises. Instead we now have a regime with near-universal application. A regime that has reduced the chance of nuclear weapons being used. A system that commits states to disarmament. A regime that has definitively put a lid on the threat of a nuclear arms race in Europe, and elsewhere. The NPT shows that nuclear arms control is not a zero-sum game: increased security for one does not mean less security for others. Fewer nuclear weapons can mean more security for all.

We have all benefited from these steps towards non-proliferation and disarmament, and we must continue to work to ensure our goals are met, including the 'Global Zero' goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons worldwide.

We are entering a new review conference cycle for the NPT. As chair of the first Preparatory Committee, the Netherlands is aware of the substantial obstacles we are facing.

The lack of agreement in 2015.

International tensions and polarisation.

Disagreements over progress on disarmament.

My country aims to revive the process and get things moving again. We may not all have precisely the same interests, but we will all win if the objectives of the NPT are met. The Dutch government is taking a new

approach, grounded in multilateralism. I have entrusted this important task to our disarmament ambassador, Henk Cor van der Kwast.

We are conducting extensive worldwide consultations. We want to take the discussions beyond Geneva and Vienna, and we want all countries to be heard – large and small. Last week, together with the government of Senegal, we held our first regional meeting in Dakar.

Next month, we will have meetings in Jakarta and Santiago, jointly organised with the governments of Indonesia and Chili. We are doing this because the NPT benefits all states, not just a few. We seek to accommodate common interests in the best possible way. We want to create new momentum that will carry through the rest of the review process.

### **[Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action]**

We all know that multilateralism isn't easy. Negotiations are often difficult and long, and sometimes frustrating. The path to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action was a rocky one. But the hard work is paying off. The IAEA has verified that Iran is upholding its commitments. The agreement has proven a success.

The Netherlands will continue to support the IAEA's verification role. And we call on all parties to continue

to fulfil their commitments. If Iran takes steps that are inconsistent with its obligations, this should be raised with its government, both directly and through multilateral channels.

### **[Cluster munitions and landmines]**

Thankfully, multilateralism is not exclusively the domain of states. Today's coalitions for disarmament are broader. Non-governmental organisations, like the Nuclear Threat Initiative, are doing excellent work. They help bridge the divide between different players and offer fresh solutions. Such new forms of multilateralism have allowed us to make great strides in protecting civilians. Take the role of non-governmental organisations in demining. NGOs carry out many of the actual mine clearance operations. They were the first to declare the ambition of a mine-free world by 2025 – a goal later adopted by the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. And NGOs are helping those states become mine-free within ten years of joining the Convention.

Our common efforts to eliminate cluster munitions are also paying off. Under the Dutch Presidency of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2016, the parties agreed to do away with cluster munitions worldwide by 2030. Domestically, the Netherlands has banned investments in companies that produce, sell or

distribute cluster munitions. We will continue to work with others to reach these goals and help countries affected by these devastating weapons.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have seen what we can achieve by working together. But I don't want to paint too rosy a picture. There is still a lot of work to do. Our willingness and ability to address shared threats will be tested.

But there are several ways we can strengthen international security.

### **[Nuclear disarmament]**

Our work on disarmament will benefit from a process being launched this week to make progress on a Fissile Material (Cut-Off) Treaty. The Netherlands is proud to be partner in this two-year endeavour, together with Canada and Germany. Ending the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons will cap nuclear arsenals and help prevent nuclear arms races. This is an important step toward nuclear disarmament. Again, this is not something that one state, or even a few states, can achieve on their own. We need input and buy-in from all stakeholders. That's why this process will include interaction with all UN member states. We look forward to relaying the expert input for further consideration by the Conference on Disarmament.

This year will see the beginning of nuclear ban treaty negotiations. The Netherlands has chosen to take part constructively, with an open mind and without being naive. We will examine how and to what extent a ban can contribute to nuclear disarmament.

Multilateralism will be the foundation of our efforts here, too. The purpose of a ban should be to strengthen international security and, by extension, our national security.

But to meet that goal, a ban must complement the existing multilateral architecture and not weaken it. It must not intensify divisions among states. And it must include nuclear weapons possessors.

### **[Conventional weapons and the arms trade]**

With respect to conventional weapons, multilateralism is needed if we are to tackle the many global challenges we face, such as technological advances in weapon systems and the arms trade. A Group of Governmental Experts will meet to discuss Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. Even though these weapons don't exist yet, we strongly believe we need to stay ahead of the curve. The Group will provide a multilateral forum for establishing common understandings. The Netherlands has worked hard over the past few years to get this group set up and will actively participate in its work. Multilateral success

often starts with initiatives by a few states. I encourage all states to show such leadership to help advance the broader disarmament agenda.

The arms trade affects us all. Following the intervention in Yemen, the Netherlands further tightened its stringent export control policy: no export licenses are granted unless it is absolutely certain that the goods cannot and will not be used in ways that violate human rights or international humanitarian law in Yemen.

We've seen the devastating effects of the illegal arms trade, from the Sahel to the heart of Europe. Weapons are deadly no matter where they come from or where they are used. The insecurity caused by the illegal arms trade doesn't stop at our borders. And neither should our efforts to combat it. This is why effective implementation and universalisation of the Arms Trade Treaty is crucial.

Conventional arms control in Europe is in disarray. Our lack of insight into each other's capabilities causes distrust. Sub-regional crises – like the situation in Ukraine – demonstrate the need to restore trust and strengthen control over conventional weapons. Again, here, we see the importance of multilateralism.

Through fora like the OSCE, Eurasian and transatlantic partners can come together to tackle these pressing issues.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These are but a few examples of why we need multilateral approaches to global challenges. The benefits of multilateralism are clear. The significant strides we've made in non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament we have made together.

International cooperation is at the heart of our progress, and it is fundamental to our national and international security.

We have achieved significant success through multilateralism. I've provided a few examples – the NPT, the JCPOA, international efforts on cluster munitions and land mines – but there are many more.

We still face big challenges, and rising geopolitical tensions are making them even more difficult. We cannot let this stop us from realising common goals, based on shared interests. Our security depends on it. We may not always agree on every detail, or even on some of the broader issues. But the lines of communication must remain open. We must seek to work together.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,

We have a great deal of work to do. In 2017, as in 1907, the Netherlands stands ready to work with

others to realise the goal of a safer and more secure world.

Thank you.