



Kingdom of the Netherlands

**Statement of the Netherlands**

**delivered by**

**H.E. Robbert Gabriëlse, Permanent Representative to the**

**Conference on Disarmament**

**at the**

**Conference on Disarmament**

**Opening Statement of the 2020 Session**

**Geneva, 21 January 2021**

Mr President,

Allow me to start by congratulating you on the assumption of the Presidency and assure you of the full support of my delegation. My delegation is encouraged by your active engagement in the run up to this year's session, as well as by the strong will among the six Presidents of the 2020 session to cooperate with each other and to ensure continuity throughout the year.

I welcome the presence of the Director General of the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Conference on Disarmament and the intervention he made on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Let me also use this opportunity to welcome and congratulate my new colleagues on the assumption of their role as Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament. The Netherlands' delegation looks forward to working with all of you in this important forum.

In addition to the statement delivered by Croatia, on behalf of the European Union, I would like to deliver the following remarks in our national capacity.

Mr President,

This year's session takes place in an important year for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The upcoming Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is an important milestone, but also for other disarmament topics – such as cluster munitions and this year's Review Conference and on cyber, the completion of the OEWG process – 2020 is an important year.

At the same time, the geopolitical situation in the world remains tense and effective multilateralism is under pressure. The past few months, we have witnessed repeated missile tests by the DPRK, which are in violation of UNSC resolutions and pose a serious threat to international security. The Netherlands is convinced that regional stability and lasting peace on the Korean peninsula can only be reached through peaceful means.

In addition to this, increasing tensions and escalatory steps in the Middle East, in particular with regard to the nuclear deal with Iran, require action. The Netherlands supports France, Germany and the United Kingdom in triggering the Dispute Resolution Mechanism of the JCPOA in order to resolve the impasse through constructive diplomatic dialogue. The Netherlands urges Iran to return to full compliance with the provisions of the nuclear agreement.

As noted by Netherlands' Foreign Minister Stef Blok in Berlin last March, to ensure strategic stability in a multipolar world, we must ensure that existing instruments are retained, while we continue to work on new instruments in the field arms control and disarmament. For the Netherlands, it is clear that the Conference on Disarmament can and must play its role by moving forward the development of new disarmament measures in line with its mandate. Such disarmament measures can take the form of norms, principles, guidelines, code of conducts, or legally binding instruments. For the Netherlands, the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices remains the key priority.

Disarmament, including the negotiation of new disarmament measures, is like running a marathon. Despite the headwinds we face, it is important for us to keep running. Heading in the right direction. And ensuring that no accidents happen along the way. This requires a pragmatic approach that focusses on the substance of our agenda. In 2018, this approach bore fruit. We had constructive substantive discussions in the subsidiary bodies leading to the adoption of substantive consensus reports.

To continue heading in the right direction we need to continue our work on the substance of our agenda. We are flexible on the format, but I will take this opportunity to share some thoughts on the programme of work

Mr President,

The Netherlands continues to argue for a pragmatic approach towards the programme of work, in which the programme of work serves merely as a planning tool for the plenary meetings of the session ahead. Thereby delinking it from the establishment of subsidiary bodies and their respective mandates, including negotiating mandates. The establishment of subsidiary bodies can be done through separate decisions once general agreement is reached on their respective mandates. As pointed out by our working paper called "Back to Basics – the Programme of Work" contained in CD/2165, this approach has been successful in the first 15 years of this body and has a number of benefits.

First, the plenary meetings of the CD will be focused on the substance of the agenda of the Conference and thereby contributing to reaching agreement on a way forward in the CD for a number of agenda items, including through subsidiary bodies. Second, by providing a clear

timetable the programme of work will allow sufficient time to all delegations for their preparations – including the submission of working papers or other proposals – and allow for the participation of experts from capital, thereby deepening the discussions. Third, by separating the programme of work from the establishment of subsidiary bodies and their mandates, discussions on the substance of the agenda can continue in the absence of consensus on those specific mandates.

I wish to underline here that this approach is fully in line with the existing rules of procedure and the past practice of the Conference. Taking this approach would enable us to return to substantive work in a pragmatic way with a view to ensuring that the CD fulfils its mandate as the single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament.

Thank you Mr President.