



EU Statement

The Conference on Disarmament and Gender Issues

Geneva, 10 March 2020

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Let me start by expressing our appreciation to you and other P6 countries for your tireless efforts to achieve consensus on a programme of work for the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is of great regret to the European Union that although a large majority of CD members overwhelmingly supported your proposal to reinvigorate substantive work in five subsidiary bodies towards concrete disarmament negotiations, a small number of delegations once again chose to prevent consensus.

Despite this disappointing outcome, we can and should make the best out of the 2020 CD session, focus on substantive issues and pave the way for concrete progress in this and other disarmament fora.

In this context, we welcome your initiative to devote attention to gender issues at the CD plenary meeting on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

2020 is a milestone year for women's rights and gender equality, marking 20 years of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and 25 years since the Beijing Conference and its Platform for Action.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

While recognising the significant progress made over the decades, it is not yet time to celebrate. In recent years, gender equality has been stalling and in some cases, backsliding, as reported by the UN. Violence against women is widespread and continues to affect approximately a third of all women and girls worldwide.

The promotion of gender equality, awareness of gender issues, empowerment of women and prevention of gender-based violence is an important cross-cutting priority for the EU. On 5 March, the European Commission adopted the new EU Strategy on Gender Equality 2020-2025, based on the fundamental principle of Equality for All. Later this year, a new ambitious Gender Action Plan III will be adopted for EU external action, which will also take into consideration the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security adopted in 2019.

We are convinced that active and equal participation and leadership of women at all levels of decision-making and implementation in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control is crucial to achieve peace, security and sustainable development. This is why the EU has decided to become a supporter of Actions 36-37 of the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament and we are grateful to the UN Secretary-General for his continued engagement on this matter. We would also like to thank the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for its valuable awareness-raising efforts.

We welcome that gender considerations are being integrated in an increasing number of UN General Assembly Resolutions and in key outcome documents adopted at important review conferences such as the UN Programme of Action against illicit small arms and light weapons (PoA SALW) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. All UN Member States have agreed to mainstream gender into their implementation efforts of the UN PoA and the International Tracing Instrument and to improve the collection of data disaggregated by gender on the illicit trade in SALW. We are also pleased that the Oslo Action Plan makes a commitment to consider gender in all aspects of mine action.

Recognizing the differing impacts of armed violence on women, men, girls and boys is a key objective for the EU. The 2018 EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition underlines that the EU will systematically mainstream gender considerations in its assistance for SALW control. The EU is also supporting a dedicated project, implemented by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), in support of gender mainstreamed policies, programmes and actions in the fight against small arms trafficking and misuse, in line with the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

We recall that the Arms Trade Treaty is the first arms control instrument to explicitly include the gender dimension, establishing a link between gender-based violence and the international arms trade, and its effective implementation can contribute to eliminating violence against women and girls, as set out in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.2. In line with the EU Common Position, EU Member States shall take the risk of gender-based violence into account in their

national export control risk assessments before authorizing arms exports. The EU welcomes the action-oriented decision in relation to gender and gender-based violence by the ATT States Parties at their 2019 annual meeting and once again commends Latvia for choosing gender as a thematic priority for its ATT Presidency.

Mr. President,

We are convinced that gender equality benefits men and women, girls and boys alike, and we encourage all CD members to take this agenda forward, as proposed in your paper.

Thank you, Mr. President