EU Statement

Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 30 June 2020

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Turkey, 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, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to congratulate Austria on assuming the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and pledge our full support for the resumption of CD meetings in an inclusive, transparent and safe manner, in full respect with the Rules of Procedure and the principles of multilateralism and multilingualism.

It is high time to come together and take stock of developments which may affect our work. We commend the outgoing Presidency, Australia, for continuing with informal consultations, building bridges and seeking convergences. We fully support the proposed technical change that would make the CD Rules of Procedures gender neutral.

The EU will continue to support the efforts of the six countries holding the CD Presidency (P6+2). They have demonstrated exemplary cooperation and coordination to improve consistency and continuity this year and beyond. We regret that no consensus has yet been reached on their proposal for a programme of work that would enable the CD to continue meaningful, technical discussions and pave the way for the long overdue start of substantive negotiations on new disarmament instruments.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic is testing the multilateral system like never before. We are encouraged that the 194 Member States of the World Health Organisation (WHO) were able to put aside their differences and adopt by consensus a resolution put forward by the European Union on a collective response to the global health crisis. We also welcome the Presidential Statement adopted by the Human Rights Council.

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* The Republic North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
The global health crisis is shaking our societies. It could deepen existing conflicts, generate new geopolitical tensions, hamper the achievement of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change bearing in mind that drought, scarcity and pressure on limited resources are already an increasing cause of conflict. The crisis could also lead to further serious human rights violations, and exacerbate disinformation campaigns and other malicious cyber activities.

No country can tackle such challenges unilaterally in a highly interdependent, globalised world. International cooperation is required whether we talk about COVID-19, climate change, irregular migration, or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We need effective multilateralism, with a strong and reformed UN equipped with the tools to address current and future challenges in a coordinated way, bearing in mind the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

The European Union was one of the earliest and strongest supporters of the call by the UN Secretary-General for a global ceasefire and we call on all actors to abide by it.

Our response to the crisis is one based on solidarity and cooperation. This is why, on 8 April 2020, the EU launched the “EU team package” of EUR 15.6 billion to assist third countries for preparedness and response to COVID-19. Several EU initiatives, such as the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence are also actively responding to the pandemic.

Mr. President,

The EU calls on all States to uphold the integrity of the rules-based international system, with effective multilateralism as a key principle and the UN at its core. They are indispensable for maintaining international peace and security.

We are deeply concerned over the continued erosion of the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and heightened tensions, which also affect the Conference on Disarmament. The current pandemic should not be used as an excuse to bring disarmament into standstill or reverse the past achievements.

This is a critical time. The EU attaches the utmost importance to the extension of New START, to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and to the implementation of all commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The EU believes that a new arms race would not serve anyone’s interests, especially at a time when we must join forces to address the common challenges humanity is faced with.

We should continue with universalisation and implementation of the conventional arms conventions, such as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and reaffirm support for the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in light of the forthcoming Review Conference. We need to continue our deliberations on issues such as lethal autonomous weapons systems, outer space and cyber and counter the threats posed by the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Also, the implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention has to continue, in particular as the pandemic has demonstrated the need for cooperation and capacity building in biosecurity/biosafety and the need for solid confidence-building measures. Despite COVID-19
the developments in these fields continue and hence multilateralism in this field needs to continue with a view to making the world more secure.

For this reason, it is important that the disarmament meetings are fully preserved and take place respectful of multilingualism and inclusivity, relevant rules of procedure and good expert participation. We hope important meetings thus far postponed, will be reprogrammed in the future.

Thank you, Mr. President