

2021 Session of the Conference on Disarmament

High Level Segment, 22-24 February

Statement by

H.E. Ekaterina Zaharieva

Deputy Prime Minister for Judicial Reform and

Minister of Foreign Affairs

of the Republic of Bulgaria

Mr. President,

Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to present my country's views related to the work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

Today, when we face security challenges of an increasingly complex nature, multilateralism is needed more than ever to achieve global peace, stability and prosperity. The CD has an impressive record in serving the objectives of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. We need a genuine political will to make the CD moving ahead.

Being part of the joint efforts of the six CD presidencies for 2021, it is our firm belief that we can advance only by working together and with everyone in the spirit of good faith and mutual respect.

The recent agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to extend the **New START** Treaty for five years is a proof that progress in addressing the challenges to strategic stability is achievable. The continued implementation of the treaty, along with constructive and active dialogue and further arms control negotiations, is a way to effective treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament.

Beyond the increased level of predictability, we do believe that the extension of the New START provides for a higher level of mutual confidence and constitutes a positive momentum for the forthcoming **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference** as well as for our common endeavors in the CD. A successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference in August (2021) will be the function of our determination and ability to keep to a pragmatic and constructive spirit aimed at advancing the efforts for elimination of nuclear weapons.

As an EU and NATO Member State, the Republic of Bulgaria continues to uphold its disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation agreements and commitments. We share the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. A solid foundation that guides us towards achieving this goal is provided by the **NPT**, which contains the necessary commitments. We believe that the only realistic way to attain the goal of effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament is through a progressive approach based on practical and feasible steps. It is essential also to take into account the complex security environment and strategic context.

The **Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty** (CTBT) continues to be an important building block in the construction of a world without nuclear weapons. Its entry into force would provide for a legally binding global ban on nuclear explosions of any kind. As an Annex II state, who has signed and ratified the Treaty, the Republic of Bulgaria continues to call upon all States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the CTBT without any further delay.

The maturity of the issue of the **Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty** (FMCT) and the necessity for commencing related negotiations as soon as possible are beyond any doubt. The work done by the High Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group is profound and forward-looking proof of this notion. For us this is a long-time priority and a logical next step in nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

As a **Member of the Executive Council of the OPCW in 2019-2021**, the Republic of Bulgaria is sparing no efforts to preserve the full and effective implementation of all decisions taken by the Chemical Weapons Convention. We should not allow, under any circumstances, the violation of the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons, negotiated at this very forum.

Multilateralism remains the most effective international tool for overcoming political differences. It provides for understanding, trust and confidence, cohesion

and predictability. The area of disarmament is not an exception and the CD is key forum in this regard.

The agenda we adopted at the beginning of our session this year is not new for all of us. It is in a way a test as to how far we are ready to go in order to defend the values of nuclear disarmament, security and peace for all.

We are convinced **the P6-2021 proposal for a Programme of Work** can be the basis for our common successful endeavor towards the CD fulfilling its mandate. After all, what we all agree upon is the need for the CD to start working.

We believe that expanding the CD membership could be one of the ways to add even more relevance to the work of this body. The Republic of Bulgaria is a champion of the CD enlargement and would like to see this issue given serious consideration.

No one but us is to prevent repeating our own history. There are no easy solutions for complex problems. Nevertheless, we believe the solutions are at hand, we only need to take them by acting wisely and with mutual respect.

In conclusion, **Mr. President**, let me reiterate that we highly value being part of the P6 team for the year 2021. We thank the Belgian and Brazilian Presidencies for their tireless work and for the spirit of respect, mutual understanding and good will, we enjoy in the cooperation with all our P6 colleagues.

Thank you.