EU Statement on thematic debate of clusters 5-7

United Nations General Assembly First Committee

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Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Cluster V on other disarmament machinery measures and international security

Mr. Chair,

The EU and its Member States strongly promote a global, open, free, stable and secure cyberspace where international law, including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms fully apply, supporting social, political and economic development. The cyber threat landscape continues to evolve and sadly cyberspace is increasingly misused to conduct malicious cyber activities, which the EU strongly condemns.

We welcome the adoption in 2021 of the reports of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on “Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security”, as well as the UN Group of Governmental Experts (UN GGE) on “Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace”. These reports reaffirm the framework for responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs, including the applicability of international law in cyberspace and the 11 norms of responsible State behaviour.

We welcome the draft resolution tabled jointly by the United States and the Russian Federation. The resolution welcomes the consensus OEWG and GGE reports and calls upon States to be guided by the reports in their use of ICTs. By doing so, it reaffirms that international law, and in particular the UN Charter, is applicable and essential to maintaining peace and stability and promoting an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

Looking ahead, we should continue this important work by implementing our achievements and by continuing our exchanges on best practices as well as our practical cooperation on capacity building.
The EU and its Member States will engage constructively in the new OEWG. At the same time, the EU believes that, in complementarity to the OEWG, there is a need for more action-oriented work and to ensure that the normative framework, developed on the basis of consensus, is implemented. This is why in 2020, the EU and its Member States were among a diverse cross-regional group including 53 UN Member States who have proposed to establish a Programme of Action to Advance Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace (PoA) to take forward this work. The PoA would offer a permanent and inclusive action-oriented mechanism within the UN to take the UN framework forward and concretely support States` capacity to implement their commitments under the UN agreed framework, including through the sharing of best practices, dialogue between relevant experts, and capacity building.

We look forward to continuing our constructive engagement in the First Committee discussions on cyber, noting the need for continued respect for international law, including international humanitarian law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

*Cluster VI on regional disarmament and security*

Mr. Chair,

The situation in Afghanistan is a major challenge for the international community as a whole. The denial of women and girls` rights is of particular concern. We reiterate that all efforts must be pursued to ensure that the Taliban cease all direct and indirect ties with international terrorism and to prevent Afghanistan from serving as a base for hosting, financing or exporting terrorism to other countries. As a matter of high priority, the EU will initiate a regional political platform of cooperation with Afghanistan`s direct neighbours.

The EU strongly condemns the clear violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine by acts of aggression by the Russian Federation in eastern Ukraine and its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we will not recognise. The large build-up of Russian military forces on Ukraine`s borders and in illegally-annexed Crimea in April this year has further increased tensions in the region. We reiterate our strong support for the Minsk agreements and the efforts of both the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Regional partnerships are in a crux of common endeavour to address regional security issues and concerns and a fundamental factor for the development of regional dialogue that can facilitate confronting issues of common interests. The EU strongly supports the establishment of regional and sub-regional confidence- and security-building measures as an important tool to build trust and enhance transparency, avoid conflict and maintain stability.

*Cluster VII on disarmament machinery*

Mr. Chair,
The EU reiterates its support for the three mutually reinforcing fora of disarmament machinery – the UN General Assembly First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the UN Disarmament Commission. The international community bears a collective responsibility to respect their integrity and ensure that these fora remain relevant and reach results in line with their agreed mandates. In the context of challenges posed by COVID, we are grateful for the continued support of the UN Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

We are convinced that the First Committee should focus on disarmament and non-proliferation issues and the current major challenges to our collective security and identify concrete measures to address them. Consideration should be given to reviewing First Committee practices and working methods, including bi-annualising or tri-annualising resolutions.

The CD remains the world’s single multilateral disarmament negotiating body and its continued relevance to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties and elaborate other instruments and norms, such as guidelines and codes of conduct, is of utmost importance for the EU. The European Union has one central aim for the CD: to reinvigorate substantive work towards concrete negotiations which have not been possible in this forum for much too long.

The EU’s longstanding priority in the CD is to immediately commence negotiations of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices (FMCT) and we support starting such negotiations in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We call on all States to contribute to facilitating the long-overdue negotiations on a FMCT.

The EU expresses its concern over the continued stalemate in the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We cannot allow yet another platform of the disarmament machinery to fall victim to issues that are not related to its substantive work.

We highly value the work of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) as a stand-alone, autonomous institution of the disarmament machinery producing high-quality research and implementing initiatives that can help to move disarmament processes forward. In this regard we appreciate UNIDIR’s substantive contributions at various disarmament fora, as also demonstrated by the EU and its Member States continued substantive funding within the UNIDIR’s Strategic Plan.