EU Statement

By

H.E. Mr. Ioannis Vrailas
Deputy Head of Delegation
Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations
at the

69th Session of the
UN General Assembly First Committee
Thematic discussion on agenda items 87 to 104
Disarmament Machinery

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

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

Mr President,

We are a strong supporter of the United Nations and effective multilateralism.

The role and contribution of the UN disarmament machinery - the components of which are mutually reinforcing - remain crucial and irreplaceable. Deliberative and negotiating bodies set up under the auspices of the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-I) need to improve their performance and reach results in line with their agreed mandates. Recent positive developments in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, such as the success of the Arms Trade Treaty and the signing of the Protocol to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty demonstrate that deliberations and negotiations in these fields can produce results.

We believe that the UNGA First Committee should serve as a forum for open and relevant exchange, able to deal with current challenges to our collective security and develop concrete measures to this end. It should concentrate its efforts on the most pertinent and topical issues, rather than maintaining the practice of proceeding in a formalistic manner and simply updating previously adopted resolutions. In order to alleviate its heavy agenda and make it more relevant, we believe that the possibility of bi- or triennialising more resolutions, in a balanced manner, should be contemplated. We welcome the initiative of the Chair to convene an informal meeting to discuss possible further improvements regarding the panel discussions as a positive step in this direction. We support further increase of the efficiency, utility and interactivity of the panels and we presented concrete suggestions in this respect.

The Conference on Disarmament, in accordance with its mandate, has the crucial role to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties. We are disappointed that it did not succeed in commencing its substantive work, including negotiations. This year however, we have noted some encouraging developments. The re-establishment of the Informal Working Group to assist in developing a Programme of Work and the structured discussions under the Schedule of Activities allowed for constructive and open debate. We hope these exercises can be built upon further.

We would also like to reiterate our longstanding commitment to the enlargement of the Conference. We underline the importance of continuing consultations on the expansion of its membership and strongly support the appointment of a special coordinator in this respect.

Consistent with our engagement with civil society, we would welcome enhanced interaction between civil society and the Conference, thus allowing a broadened contribution of NGOs and research institutions, in an inclusive manner, to the work of the Conference.

For the European Union, the immediate commencement and early conclusion of the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, remains a clear priority. National security concerns, while legitimate, can and should be addressed as part of the negotiation process rather than as a prerequisite. We appeal to delegations to

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

* Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.
show flexibility. We call on all CD member states to start negotiations on such a Treaty without delay and to begin work on the other issues on the agenda in line with the adopted Programme of Work CD/1864. We call on all states possessing nuclear weapons that have not done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We welcome the constructive discussions at the two meetings in 2014 of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The fact that the experts of a number of EU Member States participate in the GGE reflects our keen interest and commitment on this issue. We are looking forward to the report of the Chair of the GGE and the meetings in 2015 to further substantively advance the issue.

We also share the frustration that since 1999 the United Nations Disarmament Commission was not able to fulfil its mandate properly and failed to agree on any recommendations. For the EU and its Member States it is important to take a sincere look at the way the existing working methods of the UNDC have been utilized, in particular regarding its current agenda which is over-politicized. We welcome and strongly support the initiative of the UNDC Chairman to invite Member States to submit proposals on how to revitalize the work of the Commission, including the possibilities regarding modification of the substantive agenda. We also believe that the Chair’s Concept Paper on possible ways forward for the next three-year cycle is an excellent basis for further discussion. In that regard, we expressed our views at the informal meeting of 8 September and we support the UNDC Resolution proposed by the Chair as tangible means of increasing chances of success in the next three-year cycle. We are looking forward to engaging constructively in the discussions.

UNIDIR is a trusted element of the disarmament machinery, invested with a unique mandate to conduct independent research and analysis on issues relating to disarmament and security which requires a high degree of expertise. The EU and its Member States highly value UNIDIR’s activities in conducting independent research in disarmament and security. We have financially supported the important work done by the Institute on numerous occasions.

Thank you.