EU Statement

By

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at the

69th Session of the
UN General Assembly First Committee
Thematic discussion on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

United Nations
New York
23 October 2014

- Check against delivery -
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∗ and Serbia∗, 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.

1. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery continues to be a growing threat to international peace and security. Recent cases of use of chemical weapons in Syria reinforce the calls for a resolute and global approach to that threat.

2. The European Union stands united in condemning, in the strongest terms, all use of chemical weapons in Syria, which constitutes a violation of international law, a war crime, and a crime against humanity. There can be no impunity and perpetrators of the attacks must be held accountable.

3. The international community over the last year cooperated effectively and acted promptly in carrying out the destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapons stockpile, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and the decisions by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council. The removal and subsequent destruction of the declared Syrian chemicals constitute a significant step towards the necessary complete and irreversible dismantling of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The EU contributed 17 million euro for the joint UN/OPCW Plan for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. In addition, several EU Member States made important financial and other contributions to support the plan and accepted the destruction of materials on their territories.

4. However, there is still work to be done. In particular the European Union is gravely concerned about the systematic and repeated use of a toxic chemical as weapon since last April as confirmed in the second report of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM) set up to establish the facts around these allegations. New similar allegations are continuing to be made. The EU shares the view that the evidence presented by the FFM is substantial. This included reports of the use of helicopters, a capability that only the Syrian regime possesses. We support the Director-General’s decision that the FFM continue its work and we remain determined to sanction those responsible for these horrific acts. Syria must also ensure that its chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly dismantled, including the remaining production facilities.

5. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a key component of the non-proliferation and disarmament framework. Its integrity and strict application must be fully guaranteed. The EU and its Member States are the largest contributor to the OPCW and will continue to substantially support its activities financially and in kind. Achieving the goals of time bound destruction and universality remains principal challenges and we encourage those countries that have not yet adhered to or ratified the Convention to do so without delay. We call upon possessor states to expedite destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles. Chemical weapons destruction operations should continue to be conducted in a sincere and transparent fashion, and within the framework of the existing verification regime. We underline also the importance of full national implementation of the Convention.

∗ The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia 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.
6. The EU is engaged in supporting improvements in bio-safety and bio-security. New EU-financed projects are currently under implementation with the support of the World Health Organisation. The recent Ebola outbreak illustrates the potential impacts of biological pathogens in a globalised world. In this context we welcome the Global Health Security Agenda Initiative and the Security Council Resolution 2177 (2014) which determined that the unprecedented extent of the Ebola outbreak in Africa constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

7. The European Union attaches high priority to further strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), its full implementation and universalisation, making specific efforts to convince States which have not adhered to or ratified the Convention to do so without delay. Several EU projects since 2006 ensure consistent support and financial contribution for the promotion of the Convention's objectives. In this context, the role of civil society should also be reinforced. The EU remains convinced of the need to enhance compliance with the BTWC and calls upon all States Parties to meet the requirements set by successive Review Conferences that returns on Confidence Building Measures are to be submitted annually. Effective national implementation is also fundamental for the integrity on the Convention. The current inter-sessional process, in the run-up to the 2016 Review Conference, offers an opportunity to identify innovative approaches, such as the proposed peer-review mechanism. The EU looks forward to discussing it further at the next meeting of States parties. The cross-regional interest in the biennial item on how to strengthen the implementation of Article VII earlier this year showed that there is room for a substantive discussion and for the identification of concrete avenues for work.

8. The EU has continued to make progress with the implementation of its Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence (CoE) Initiative, which aims at reinforcing the institutional capacity of partner countries to prevent, detect and fight against the CBRN risk and strengthen the overall security architecture. This project is the largest initiative contributing to non-proliferation ever undertaken by the European Union. Around 100 million euro is dedicated to its implementation.

9. The risk that non-state actors acquire weapons of mass destruction adds a further critical dimension. It is vitally important to enhance international cooperation, both in the framework of the United Nations and amongst all Member States, in order to address these challenges. This year, marked the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the UNSCR 1540-Since the beginning, the European Union has been a staunch supporter of the robust and effective implementation of the resolution with the objective of strengthening global efforts in this regard. New projects have been adopted with a view to continue promoting the full implementation of the resolution and to provide assistance to third countries in complying with their obligations under UNSCR 1540.

10. The EU will continue to promote international efforts to prevent the acquisition and the use by terrorists of weapons of mass destruction and to strengthen the international framework, as well as national capabilities. To that purpose, the EU will actively support among other initiatives the adoption of the biennial resolution 'Preventing the acquisition by terrorists of radioactive sources', presented by France and Germany.

11. The EU strongly believes that the proliferation of missiles, especially those capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction, continues to be a serious concern to us all and a threat to international peace and security, as reaffirmed in UN Security Council Resolutions 1540, 1887 and 1977. A number of tests of short and medium range missiles conducted over the last years outside all existing transparency and pre-notification schemes and in violation of UN
Security Council resolutions, especially by the DPRK and Iran, deepen our concern. The use of hundreds of ballistic missiles by the Syrian government also raises deep concerns as it represents an immediate threat to its civilian population and is destabilising peace and security in the region.

12. The Hague Code of Conduct is the only multilateral transparency and confidence building instrument concerning the spread of ballistic missiles. The EU strongly supports the Code and believes that this important instrument, to which all EU Member States are subscribing States, should become universal. Despite the increasing recognition of the Code and the support of the UN General Assembly, a number of key States with important activities in the area of ballistic missiles and space launch vehicles have not yet joined it. The EU will promote the universalisation of the Code and, where possible and appropriate, a closer relationship between the Code and the UN system, through our unanimous support to the biennial resolution of the UN General Assembly and similarly to previous years, our outreach event to be held in the margins of the First Committee. We call on all States that have not yet done so to adhere to it as soon as possible.

13. Export controls are also essential to prevent missile proliferation. We consider that the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) plays a key role and we continue to promote EU Member States' membership in export control regimes. We are also in favour of examining further multilateral steps to prevent the threat of missile proliferation and to promote disarmament efforts in the missile field.

14. We continue to support other international mechanisms designed to prevent the proliferation of WMDs, such as the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction which has become an important platform of coordination and cooperation. The EU Centres of Excellence continue to contribute within the Global Partnership. Export controls, particularly those based on the Australia Group lists, are also very important tools to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.