

Conference on Disarmament

25 September 2023

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Note Verbale dated 5 September 2023 from the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva transmitting the statement of Spain on behalf of the European Union on the New Agenda for Peace related to the agenda item 6 as delivered in the Conference on Disarmament on 8 August

The Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament and has the honour to submit the statement of Spain on behalf of the European Union on the New Agenda for Peace related to the agenda item 6 as delivered in the Conference on Disarmament on 8 August. The delegation of Spain has the honour to request that the statement be issued as an official document of the 2023 session of the Conference on Disarmament and listed under a respective item of the CD agenda.

The Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament the assurances of its highest consideration.



Annex

European Union, Statement on the New Agenda for Peace, Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, 8 August 2023

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania¹, the potential candidate country Georgia as well as the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

We welcome the publication and today's discussion on the UN Secretary-General's policy brief on "A New Agenda for Peace." In our view, such a timely and comprehensive vision on how to address the multifaceted challenges of today's world is needed. Conflict prevention, including disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation, for a safer world and for the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, must form a central pillar of the New Agenda for Peace.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine poses a serious threat to existing disarmament and non-proliferation norms, the integrity of institutions, and arms control arrangements. It is of utmost importance that we uphold the rules-based international order, the UN Charter and treaty obligations, and protect and strengthen the global arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation architecture.

Transparency and confidence-building measures play a critical role in rebuilding trust among States, and thereby help pave the way to consolidating the existing disarmament architecture and creating an effective collective security system. They foster cooperation and can help pave the way for deeper progress in disarmament efforts.

Mr. President,

We already addressed issues of nuclear disarmament and risk reduction, which form important part of the policy brief, in greater detail in the CD, and continue to do so in other relevant fora.

The EU welcomes the Secretary-General's call for adherence to the highest nuclear safeguards standards, their updating in light of technological developments and ensuring accountability. We firmly support the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), actively promote its entry into force and call for the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices.

Consistent with the Secretary General's calls to strengthen measures against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the EU firmly supports strengthening export controls, keeping them up-to-date, and promoting multilateral export control regimes as essential tools for cooperation in preventing the further spread of WMDs and in facilitating legitimate trade.

Mr. President,

We support the call of the Secretary General for the development of international norms, rules and principles to address threats to space systems, which are essential to improve space security and prevent potential conflicts. The EU is actively engaged in this work.

Peace and stability also need to be preserved and reinforced in cyberspace. The EU is defending and promoting responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in the dedicated UN format discussions, such as the OEWG which will continue to take on these issues forward in the proposed PoA process on cyber issues. The New Agenda for Peace should aim to

¹ North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

strengthen global resilience, advance and promote the UN framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, including the application of existing international law and rules-based international order in cyberspace, and develop and implement practical cooperative measures, such as regional confidence-building measures between States.

The emerging domain of biotechnologies also demand our attention. The EU is actively engaged in strengthening prevention and response to risks linked to biotechnologies.

The Secretary General notes that nature of conflicts has changed and that AI is both an enabling and a disruptive technology. The EU recognizes the potential opportunities and risks associated with the development and use of AI in the military domain, including its implications for global security. The EU reaffirms its commitment to promoting responsible approaches based on appropriate and necessary levels of human control and judgment in the development, deployment, and use of AI technologies in military applications. We must strive to develop the necessary framework on the responsible use of military applications of AI and welcome the intensifying international momentum in this regard. We addressed this issue at the discussion in the CD last week.

The EU recalls the need to ensure that the development, production, deployment and use of emerging technologies in the area of LAWS must be in compliance with international law, in particular International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In that regard, we support that a distinction should be made between those weapon systems that cannot be used in accordance with international law, in particular IHL, which States should commit not to develop, produce or use, and systems that include autonomous features, requiring regulation to ensure compliance with IHL and other applicable international law.

We fully share the aim expressed under Action 7 of the policy brief to reduce the human cost of weapons. In this regard we recall the conclusion of the Political Declaration Process on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) has been an important achievement in this regard.

Mr. President,

The EU believes that revitalizing the UN disarmament machinery is essential. We are very concerned that the CD continues to be deadlocked. This state of affairs is not tenable and stands in stark contrast to the significant security challenges we face today. We believe that a revitalized Conference on Disarmament can play a pivotal role in advancing the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. An improved functioning of the CD requires a collective commitment and engagement of all member states of the CD. We reject Russia's politically motivated approach to block the participation of UN member states, international organisations and non-governmental organisations in international fora and processes, including the Conference on Disarmament. We take note of the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General "to reform the disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, in order to optimize their respective roles".

Gender equality and the full empowerment of all women and girls are important cross-cutting priorities for the EU. We welcome and support efforts to promote gender equality and improve women's full, active, equal, and meaningful participation, including in leadership positions in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control fora. The EU will engage further to transform gendered power dynamics in peace and security as suggested by the UN Secretary-General in action 5 of his recommendations. We need to generate more political will.

I thank you, Mr. President.