



**European Union**

## **EU Statement at General Debate**

### **First Preparatory Committee for the 11th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**

**Vienna, 31 July – 11 August 2023**

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Albania\*, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina,\* Iceland\* and San Marino.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of the chairmanship of the first Preparatory Committee meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and assure you of the EU's full support. We appreciate the inclusive and transparent approach you have adopted for the preparations.

The EU deeply regrets that, in spite of all tireless efforts, the Tenth NPT Review Conference was not able to adopt a final outcome document due to Russia blocking consensus. While we also regret that no outcome was achieved at last week's Working Group, we are encouraged by the highly interactive and substantive discussions, including on transparency and accountability and we aim at continuing the work on strengthening the review process. The EU and its Member States remain united in their unequivocal support to uphold and strengthen the Treaty, which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI and an important element in the development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes.

The EU recognises the NPT's historic achievements in limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, in facilitating cooperation on nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and in significantly reducing nuclear weapon stockpiles in previous decades. The NPT's continued vitality is especially important in view of the current security environment marked by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as well as serious

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\* Candidate Countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

\* Iceland is a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

proliferation crises and challenges. The NPT has an enduring value and its full implementation is needed now more than ever.

At the start of this new review cycle, our priority must be to uphold and preserve the NPT as a key multilateral instrument, promote its universalisation and strengthen its implementation. We call upon States that have not yet done so to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States and, pending their accession, to adhere to its terms. We reiterate the EU's strong, resolute and continuous support for all three pillars of the NPT and will continue to promote a comprehensive, balanced and substantive full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan. We stress the need to implement all obligations under the NPT, and commitments during previous Review Conferences, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of Article VI, with the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We are resolved to seek a safer and more secure world for all in accordance with the goals of the Treaty in a way that promotes international stability, peace and security. Ensuring the implementation of the 64 actions in the 2010 Action Plan is a collective responsibility shared by all States Parties to the NPT without exception.

Mr. Chair,

Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine drastically changed the paradigms of both global and European peace and security. The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and President Putin's threats of nuclear use seriously undermine and have a significant negative impact on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The blatant violation by Russia of the Budapest Memorandum, its irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, as well as other unacceptable acts against nuclear safety and security in Ukraine, in particular its ongoing illegal seizure of the Zaporozhzhia nuclear power plant, are detrimental to the NPT. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the attacks against Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The partial destruction of the Kakhovka dam is a particularly serious act. It once again illustrates the tragic consequences of an aggression for which Russia bears sole responsibility. In this regard, we support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to help strengthen nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and to implement safeguards, including its missions on the ground and the Director General's efforts to protect the ZNPP.

The EU reiterates its resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression, with Belarus' complicity, against Ukraine, which constitutes a manifest violation of international law and the UN Charter. We urge Russia to immediately end the preparations for deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus, which will further exacerbate already heightened tensions. The EU demands that Russia immediately cease its military actions, withdraw all its troops from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its

internationally recognised borders. The EU remains strongly committed to the fight against impunity. Our support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and its inherent right of self-defence remains unwavering. We will stand by Ukraine with steadfast support for as long as it takes.

EU Member States remain committed to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT. We stress the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of Article VI, especially through the overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons, taking into account the special responsibility of the States that possess the largest nuclear arsenals. In this regard, the EU is deeply concerned about Russia's purported suspension of the New START Treaty. We call on Russia to immediately return to compliance with the New START Treaty and fulfil all its obligations. The EU strongly encourages seeking further reductions to their arsenals, including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons and to pursue further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, risk reduction, verification activities, laying the ground for even more robust and ambitious future arms control agreements and reporting.

The EU is extremely concerned by the rapid and extensive build-up of China's nuclear arsenal, which runs counter to its Article VI commitments. Therefore, we urge China to refrain from further build-up, immediately take measures to improve the transparency of its nuclear weapons, and pursue risk reduction measures. In this context, we call on China to respond positively to calls for an arms control dialogue as a first step to joining future arms control agreements.

The EU notes the very severe consequences associated with nuclear weapons use and emphasises that all States share the responsibility to prevent such an occurrence from happening.

Mr. Chair,

The EU considers the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) universalisation and entry into force a top priority and calls on all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in Annex 2, to sign and ratify the CTBT without preconditions or further delay. We also call on all States to abide by the moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, and to refrain from any action contrary to the object and purpose of the Treaty.

The EU calls 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. Pending a future Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) in force, the EU calls on China and all States concerned to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material

for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In line with this longstanding priority, the EU has submitted a Working Paper on a set of actions advancing the objectives of an FMCT.

The EU reaffirms the value of multilateral cooperation in advancing nuclear disarmament verification, an essential component of future disarmament and arms control frameworks, which can contribute to the implementation of Article VI.

The EU recognizes that negative security assurances strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and calls on all nuclear weapon States to reaffirm existing security assurances noted by relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The EU acknowledges the critical importance of existing nuclear weapons free zones for peace and security and remains committed to the implementation of the Resolution on Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

Mr. Chair,

The EU remains seriously concerned in the face of persistent proliferation crises and challenges, which represent a threat to international peace and security, and it underlines its resolve to increase non-proliferation efforts and to strengthen, universalize and render more effective the nuclear non-proliferation architecture.

As a key security priority, the EU will continue to invest diplomatically and politically to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon. To this end, the EU remains committed to the JCPOA. However, we are deeply concerned by the successive IAEA reports documenting the alarming acceleration of Iran's nuclear programme. The risk of a nuclear non-proliferation crisis in the region has further increased as a result of Iran's escalating nuclear trajectory. We strongly urge Iran to reverse its nuclear trajectory and to return to its political commitments, and to its legal obligations. The EU calls on all countries to support the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015).

The EU reiterates that the DPRK must comply immediately with its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions by abandoning all its nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missile programmes and existing nuclear programmes, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and cease all related activities. The DPRK cannot and will never have the status of a nuclear weapon state under the NPT or any other special status in that regard. The EU urges the DPRK to return immediately to full compliance with the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon State and its NPT Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA, bring into force the Additional Protocol and sign and ratify the CTBT. The EU urges the DPRK to resume meaningful dialogue with all the main parties. The EU is ready to work with all relevant partners and promote any meaningful diplomatic process aimed at building sustainable

peace and security and take steps aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Chair,

The EU is resolved to ensure the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards, recognising the IAEA's important work and central role in this regard. The EU calls on all States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the international nuclear safety and security conventions without delay. Ahead of the 2024 International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS), we must sustain our efforts to strengthen global nuclear security and nuclear security culture. The EU stresses that the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement together with the Additional Protocol constitute the current verification standard under the NPT and calls for their universalisation without delay.

The EU remains committed to ensuring the responsible, safe and secure development of peaceful uses of nuclear technology and welcomes the IAEA's activities in supporting its Member States in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement commitments including in the context of COP28. The EU reaffirms its support for the inalienable right of all Parties to the NPT to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with the NPT, including in the framework of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme.

The EU recalls the importance of effective export controls, in accordance with Article III of the NPT, and in compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions 1540, 1887 and 2325. We reiterate that export control regimes allow States to ensure that proliferation concerns are addressed and thus facilitate the development of peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

The EU underlines that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a top horizontal priority and believes it is important to integrate gender perspectives into discussions across the three pillars of the NPT. The EU fully supports and promotes the equal participation of women and men in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. To this end, we welcome initiatives such as the "Young Women Next Generation Initiative" established by the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium. The EU is also the largest donor to the IAEA's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

In conclusion, we reiterate our commitment to further contribute to the work of the First Preparatory Committee, as well throughout the whole NPT review cycle, with the aim of advancing our common objective and making concrete progress towards that goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chair