Statement on behalf of the European Union

By

Mr. Jean Lint
Ambassador
Ministry of External Affairs, Belgium

at the First Committee

On

Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
1. I speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and Iceland†, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

2. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continues to be a major threat to international peace and security that calls for a global approach. The risk that terrorists acquire biological or chemical weapons adds a further critical dimension. It is vitally important to enhance international cooperation, both in the framework of the United Nations and between all Member States, in order to address these challenges.

3. The main multilateral instruments relevant to this cluster debate are the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. These legally binding prohibitions play a key role in reducing the threat from such weapons of mass destruction. Full compliance with their provisions is of critical importance to international peace and security. The European Union calls for the full universalisation of these instruments. We also call on all States to consider withdrawing any reservation made upon acceding to the 1925 Protocol.

4. The BTWC is the cornerstone of multilateral efforts to prevent the proliferation of biological and toxin weapons. The BTWC does not only prohibit state sponsored bio-weapons programmes. Full implementation of the Convention's Article IV by all its State Parties will also help combat the threat posed by terrorists.

5. The EU is working, through its Joint Action, to help promote universalisation and national implementation of the BTWC. Interested states not yet parties to the BTWC can receive pre-accession assistance from the EU, for example legislative assistance. BTWC States Parties can receive EU support in the form of targeted workshops for decision-making authorities and other stakeholders as well as training and visits to the authorities of EU Member States. The next regional workshop on national implementation is planned to take place in Nigeria in October.

6. The European Union contributed actively to the BTWC intersessional process. It hosted two international workshops for developing countries on intersessional topics in 2009 and 2010, thereby providing substantive input to the debate. This year's meeting of experts in August again proved the usefulness of regular exchanges on key themes relevant to the implementation of the convention.

7. The EU is looking forward to the BTWC Review Conference in 2011. We stand ready to work with all States and other stakeholders to make positive and substantive contributions to the preparatory process and to the outcome of this Conference. In this context and beyond, the European Union recalls its commitment to the development of measures to verify compliance with the Convention.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 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.
8. The European Union calls on all States Parties to the BTWC to submit their annual confidence building measures on time. The EU welcomes the fact that participation in this important mechanism, which serves to strengthen the Convention, has increased over the last few years. However, much remains to be done to ensure full participation by all States Parties in this politically binding mechanism. The question of an evaluation and possible improvement of the confidence-building measures mechanism and its functioning should be given further consideration as part of the Review Conference. Through the EU Joint Action, the EU has funded a CBM guide, organises CBM workshops and carries out assistance visits.

9. The Implementation Support Unit for the BTWC plays a particularly important role in maintaining the link between the States Parties to the BTWC. The EU wishes to express its continued appreciation and support for the work done by the ISU.

10. In addition, the EU supports the strengthening of bio-safety and bio-security in third countries through a series of other projects, including through a Joint Action in support of the World Health Organization.

Mr Chairman,

11. The Chemical Weapons Convention - the first international treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under international verification – is a major multilateral achievement. Today, no more than seven United Nations Members have yet to become party to the CWC, including two signatories. The European Union continues to urge those seven States to join in our common endeavour of ridding the world of chemical weapons.

12. Time bound destruction of chemical weapons remains a key objective of the Convention, and the European Union is heartened by the fact that three declared possessor States have completed destruction of their stockpiles as provided for in the CWC. It is of utmost importance that the remaining possessor States continue to be mindful of their obligations, address their challenges effectively, and take all necessary measures to accelerate operations with a view to completing destruction on time.

13. Destruction of the weapons of the past must be accompanied by the prevention of new chemical weapons created in the future. In particular the provisions on industry verification, national implementation and challenge inspections are vital for pursuing the non-proliferation goals of the Convention. We also support strongly efforts to strengthen Article X on assistance and protection against chemical weapons. The work done by Tunisia and the OPCW Technical Secretariat for the third exercise on the delivery of assistance (ASSISTEX 3) is a clear example of the sort of crucial activity in this area that is essential. The European Union recognizes that the implementation of all articles of the Convention can prevent toxic chemicals from falling into the hands of terrorists – this applies in particular to measures that lead to enhanced national implementation. The European Union calls on all concerned States to ensure that the necessary legislation and infrastructure are in place to implement the CWC in an effective manner.

14. One expression of the European Union’s commitment to the aims of the CWC is our continued support to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Since 2005, the EU has provided more than seven million euro to support OPCW projects with the aim of promoting the universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its full implementation by States Parties. The European Union is now implementing a Council
Decision of July 2009 that will promote further ratifications by non-States Parties and enhance the capacities of States Parties to fulfil their obligations under the Convention.

15. It would be remiss not to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey for his appointment as Director General of the OPCW. The European Union looks forward to working closely with him and all his staff as we continue our work to reach the universality and full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr Chairman,

16. The European Union continues to fully support the actions taken under UN Security Council Resolution 1540. This resolution is fundamental to the development of effective mechanisms to prevent and counter proliferation to non-State actors of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. We urge all States to comply with and fully implement the legally binding obligations of this resolution, and resolutions 1673 and 1810. Resolution 1540 requires that all States shall take and enforce effective measures to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery, including controls over related materials. To this end, the States shall also establish transit and brokering controls. In this context, the EU dual-use export control regime continued to be strengthened through the revised Council Regulation setting up a Community regime that now covers the control of exports, transfer, brokering and transit of dual use items. Since its entry into force on 27 August 2009, the new regulation is applied in all 27 EU Member States.

17. The EU has provided and will continue to provide significant support to third countries to ensure the full implementation of UNSCR 1540. The EU has been assisting several countries in complying with their obligations under UNSCR 1540, including through several regional outreach activities. When providing assistance, the EU collaborates with the 1540 Committee, the UNODA and other major donors to ensure efficiency and avoid overlapping.

18. The EU continues to support other international mechanisms designed to prevent the proliferation of WMD, such as the G8 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. The EU is contributing constructively to the discussion within the G8 about the necessary evolution and update of the Global partnership in order for this mechanism to respond fully to current threats.

19. The EU is very concerned by the risks caused by the proliferation of missiles that could be used to deliver weapons of mass destruction, including ballistic missiles of increasingly great range and sophisticated technologies. A number of tests of mid- and long-range missiles conducted over the last years outside all existing transparency and pre-notification schemes, especially by the DPRK and Iran, deepen our concern.

20. The European Union continues to consider that the Hague Code of Conduct and the Missile Technology Control Regime are the best existing tools to address the problem of missile proliferation. It calls on all Member States to support and adopt the General Assembly Resolution on HCoC. The EU reaffirms the clear multilateral and universal purpose of the HCoC. We call on all States that have not already done so to adhere to this Code as soon as possible. We also call on all Subscribing States to uphold the authority of the Code and to fully implement all its provisions, including on pre-launch notifications. Disregard for key provisions of the Code would undermine its viability and functioning. In this context, the EU welcomes the progress made recently on the implementation of the HCoC. Let me recall that the EU, through a Council Decision, supports several projects aimed at promoting
universalisation, better implementation and strengthening of the HCoC. The latest EU activities include an outreach workshop for African, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries and a planned visit to the Kourou Space Launch site. The EU also financed an electronic information exchange system, which was adopted by the HCoC Annual Meeting in May 2010.

21. The EU is also in favour of examining further multilateral steps to prevent the threat of missile proliferation and to promote disarmament efforts in the missile field. Our proposal to start consultations on a treaty banning short and intermediate range ground to ground missiles remains valid.

Mr Chairman,

22. International legal provisions are essential but not enough by themselves: they must be effectively implemented. Each State must comply with its non-proliferation obligations. Operational cooperation is required to prevent and disrupt illicit transfers, to control exports even more effectively, to counter illegal networks of diversion and trafficking, and to combat proliferation financing.

Thank you.