EU Statement

By

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at the

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UN General Assembly First Committee
Thematic discussion on agenda items 89 to 107

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- 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 countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We are a strong supporter of the United Nations and effective multilateralism. We consider that the UN General Assembly and Its First Committee, the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and the different international treaties and regimes in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing.

The existence of new threats to international security makes it more important than ever to have properly functioning disarmament machinery. Since global security problems require cooperative and multilateral solutions, it is time to reinforce and revitalise the UN disarmament machinery the role of which remains central and irreplaceable. Deliberative and negotiating bodies set up under the auspices of SSOD-1 need to improve their performance and reach results in line with their agreed mandates. Progress made in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, with the successful ATT negotiating process constituting the most recent example, demonstrates that deliberations and negotiations on these issues can yield results.

We believe that the UNGA First Committee 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 resolutions previously adopted. It should serve as a forum for open and relevant exchanges, able to deal with contemporary challenges to our collective security and develop concrete measures to this end.

Each year, several resolutions are adopted without substantial discussions. In order to alleviate the heavy agenda of the Committee and make it more relevant, we believe that the possibility of bi- or triennializing more resolutions, in a balanced manner, should be contemplated. We also suggest reviewing the practice established in the First Committee: the UN Secretary-General is often requested to prepare a report on the implementation of a resolution and, in some instances, not even the sponsors of the given resolution provide the necessary information to the Secretariat. All UN member states share responsibility for maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of this committee.

We welcome that fact that in 2013, a more substantive and active debate took place in the UN Disarmament Commission. Nevertheless, the overall participation still remained regrettably low. In April 2014, the UNDC will continue elaborating recommendations on the basis of working papers issued by the two working group chairs. The next session will also be the last one in the

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* 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 EFTA and the European Economic Area.
current three year cycle. We think this gives a good opportunity for us all to demonstrate our will to make the UNDC once again become a relevant body and let it fulfil its true potential.

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 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 to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. All EU Member States supported resolution 67/53 of the General Assembly. We are looking forward to the meetings of the group of governmental experts established by this resolution to take place in 2014.

The CD, in accordance with its mandate, has a crucial role to negotiate multilateral treaties. Its ongoing stalemate remains deeply troubling. Adopting and implementing a Programme of Work is more urgent than ever. We express our hope that the informal working group established under CD/1956/Rev.1 will lead to concrete and tangible results in this regard. In line with our longstanding commitment to the enlargement of the CD, we strongly support appointing a special coordinator on the expansion of the membership. Consistent with our engagement with civil society, we are looking forward to the enhanced interaction between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament, thus strengthening the contribution of NGOs and research institutions to the work of the Conference.

Resolution 65/87 reiterated that UNIDIR should continue to conduct independent research on problems relating to disarmament and security and to undertake specialized research requiring a high degree of expertise. In our view, the Institute is a trusted element of the disarmament machinery invested with a unique role. The EU and its Member States highly value UNIDIR’s activities in conducting independent research on disarmament and security: we have financially supported the important work done by the Institute on numerous occasions, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the work of the GGEs on Cyber Security and TCBMs. The importance for UNIDIR to maintain its autonomy as established by SSOD-1 was confirmed by UNGA resolution 65/87.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to assist the United Nations disarmament machinery to deliver tangible results and underline the need to promote strategic synergies and coordination amongst relevant UN institutions.