EU Statement

By

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at the

68th Session of the
UN General Assembly First Committee
Thematic discussion on agenda items 89 to 107

15th Meeting – Cluster on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction

United Nations
New York
23 October 2013

- 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 and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continues to be a growing threat to international peace and security. Current grave cases of use of WMD reinforce the calls for a resolute and global approach. 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.

The EU also welcomed the investigation launched by the UN Secretary-General into the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, and its report on events in Damascus on 21 August, which presented reliable evidence confirming that a large-scale chemical attack was perpetrated on that day with the use of Sarin. The investigation illustrates the viability of the Secretary-General’s mechanism as an important instrument.

The European Union welcomes United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 and the OPCW Executive Council Decision of 27 September 2013 on the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons, as they represent a major step towards a robust, sustainable and unified international response to the crisis in Syria. These important decisions provide for the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria, impose a binding declaration and verification regime on the Syrian Arab Republic and demonstrate the will of the international community to respond to threats posed by these weapons of mass destruction. Legally binding and enforceable, Security Council resolution 2118 qualifies the use of chemical weapons as a threat to international peace and security, urges the regime to comply with these obligations, condemns the attacks of 21 August, calls for accountability for this crime and envisages a forceful international reaction in the event of non-compliance. We reiterate our readiness to support actions foreseen under the UNSC resolution as well as under the decision of the OPCW Executive Council.

The European Union takes this opportunity to warmly congratulate the OPCW on the award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize. The award came as the Organisation continues its joint mission with the UN to destroy Syria’s chemical weapons which can contribute to a peaceful and durable solution of this aspect of the Syrian crisis. We reiterate the EU's commitment to assist in this unprecedented challenge in the history of the OPCW and stand ready to receive requests for EU support with resources and funding.

The use of an increasing number of ballistic missiles by the Syrian government also raises deep concerns as it represents an immediate threat to its civilian population and has the potential of destabilising peace and security in the region. This threat is all the more serious since most of those missiles are capable of carrying chemical warheads that the government publicly claimed to possess.

* 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.
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. We welcome that the Third Review Conference of the (CWC), held in The Hague in April 2013, took place in a positive atmosphere. It conducted a thorough review of the functioning of the Convention and adopted a consensus report containing an ambitious and substantive forward-looking agenda for the OPCW. The EU was pleased to note that several of its priorities were duly reflected in the report, notably on destruction deadlines, scientific and technological developments and maintenance of key expertise in the Technical Secretariat. The final report included a reference to Syria in the political declaration part. The first ever presence of a UN Secretary-General at a review conference underlined the high interest of the international community in the issue of chemical weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation. The EU and its Member States are the largest contributors to the OPCW. Having allocated 12 million euros so far, the EU will continue to support the activities of the Organization.

Time bound destruction of chemical weapons remains one of the principles of the Convention. We call upon possessor states to complete destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles in the shortest time possible. Chemical weapons destruction operations should continue to be conducted in a sincere and transparent fashion, and within the framework of the existing verification regime.

The European Union attaches high priority to the further strengthening of the BTWC and its full implementation. The EU welcomes the accession of Cameroon, Nauru, Guyana and Malawi to the BTWC. The potential risk emanating from biological agents and toxins used as weapons poses new challenges to international peace and security. Following the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention held in Geneva in December 2011, the EU has engaged constructively in the inter-sessional process by actively promoting universality, national implementation and full compliance with the Convention. For us, national implementation is also an issue of great importance. The new inter-sessional process offers the opportunity to consider ways and means, including innovative approaches, to enhance national implementation through voluntary exchanges of information, such as the proposed peer-review mechanism, and the sharing of best practices among State parties. For us, confidence-building measures (CBMs) remain an important instrument to promote the purpose of the BTWC. The constructive Meeting of Experts last August identified some key issues that will help further advance our work at the Meeting of States Parties.

Based on the Council Decision adopted in 2012, several ongoing EU projects ensure continued support and financial contribution to promote the BTWC objectives through the organisation of regional workshops, enhanced assistance programmes, and various enabling tools and activities with the valuable assistance of the ISU as the implementing agency. The EU is also engaged in supporting improvements in bio-safety and bio-security. New financing projects with a view to further support WHO activities in the areas of laboratory bio-safety and bio-security should be adopted by the end of this year.

The EU has continued to make progress with the implementation of the CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative, enhancing the institutional capacity of partner countries to mitigate CBRN risks, whether they are criminal, accidental or natural in origin. Regional secretariats were opened in Amman and Manila. Thirty-four projects amounting to EUR 40 million were launched and contracting is underway. The Initiative should reach a total budget of nearly EUR 100 million by the end of 2013.
We continue 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. In this context, the EU dual-use export control regime has been strengthened and now covers the control of exports, transfer, brokering and transit of dual use items. 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. In doing so, the EU closely cooperates with the 1540 Committee, UNODA and with other major donors to ensure efficiency and avoid overlapping.

We continue to support other international mechanisms designed to prevent the proliferation of WMDs, such as the G8 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 G8 Global Partnership as a tool to facilitate exchange of information regionally and possibly avoid duplication among donors. Export control regimes, such as the Australia Group, are also very important tools to prevent the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.

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 medium and intermediate range missiles conducted over last years outside all existing transparency and pre-notification schemes and in violation of UNSC resolutions, especially by the DPRK and Iran deepen our concern.

We believe that a multilateral response and international norms are the most adequate and effective way to address the issue of ballistic missile proliferation. The EU strongly supports the Hague Code of Conduct, which is one of the very few existing multilateral instruments in the field of ballistic missile proliferation can be discussed in order to foster confidence-building and transparency. All EU Member States have subscribed to the Code and the EU has continued to pursue and support its three aspects: universality, implementation, and enhanced and improved functioning. 136 States have subscribed so far to the HCoC. While the EU welcomes this strong international support it considers that further work needs to be done for the Code to reach universality. We call on all States that have not yet done so to adhere to it as soon as possible.

Export controls are also essential to prevent missile proliferation. We consider that the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) plays a key role and 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.

Challenges posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remain and must be addressed in a cooperative manner. It is our collective task to ensure that we prevent and disrupt illicit transfers, control exports more effectively, counter illegal network of diversion and trafficking and combat proliferation financing.