Geneva, 24 January 2012

Conference on Disarmament
(1st Part: 23 January - 30 March 2012)
Geneva, 24 January 2012

EU Statement

Mr. President,

Allow me first to congratulate you on behalf of the European Union on the assumption of the post as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2012 session.

The Acceding state Croatia*, as well as the Candidate Countries Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*¹ and Iceland², the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

Mr. President,

We have heard again the urgent appeal made on behalf of the UN Secretary General to this Conference to commence substantive work without further delay and to adopt a Programme of Work at the earliest possible date. Last year the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters in its Report suggested to the Secretary General to encourage progress on a Programme of Work based on the consensus document CD/11864. The European Union fully supports and endorses these appeals. All CD members bear the responsibility of making the CD deliver according to its mandate. We strongly value close and continuous coordination of the six presidencies, which could considerably contribute to our work.

Indeed, last autumn the UN General Assembly's First Committee heard the overwhelming call for the commencement of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament. The CD should heed this call and the EU would like to see effective follow-up to it. All EU member states together with other UN Member States cosponsored the resolution on Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. Your strong personal commitment, Mr President, as well as the efforts of your Government, will be an essential and extremely welcome contribution to this process. We hope that the consultations you conducted during the inter-sessional period will enable the adoption at the earliest possible date of a balanced and comprehensive Programme of Work, followed by its swift implementation.

Mr. President,

Let me recall that the European Union attaches a clear priority to 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 (FMCT) on the basis of document CD/1299 of 24 March 1995 and the mandate contained therein, and subsequently reiterated in CD/11864. For the European Union, launching and concluding these negotiations is urgent and important as an essential step to seek a safer world for all and to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the goals of the NPT. All CD Member States should appreciate that national security concerns, while legitimate, can

¹ * Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
² * Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.
and should be addressed as part of the negotiation process rather than as a prerequisite. We also consider that there are confidence-building measures that can be taken immediately, without the need to wait for the commencement of formal negotiations. This is why we call on all states possessing nuclear weapons to declare and uphold a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The Member States of the European Union also remain ready to engage in substantive discussion on the other items that were included in CD/1864: on practical steps for progressive and systematic efforts to reduce nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal of their elimination, including on approaches toward potential future work of a multilateral character; on all issues related to the prevention of an arms race in outer space and on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as on other issues on the Conference on Disarmament agenda.

The European Union would like to restate its longstanding attachment to the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. We underline the importance of continuation consultations on the expansion of the membership as expressed in the operative paragraphs of Resolution A66/59 on the Report of last year's session and strongly support the call to appoint in 2012 a special co-ordinator on the expansion of the CD membership.

Mr. President,

The European Union's commitment to the CD has not diminished. At the same time, we are aware that the adoption of a Programme of Work will require sustained political effort. If the CD's standstill continues the international community will increasingly reflect on options and other ways to ensure progress in multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament.

The year 2012 must be used effectively to put the CD back on track. We cannot afford another year of fruitless consultations procedural manoeuvres and the persistent abuse by some Member States of the consensus rule that prevents us from undertaking priority disarmament tasks. The UNGA First Committee has insisted on the urgent need to revitalize the work of multilateral disarmament bodies and urged the CD to agree early in 2012 on a programme of work including the immediate commencement of negotiations on a FMCT. We believe that the Conference has an obligation to act, before we report back in the autumn. The credibility and legitimacy of the CD is at stake.

In 2012 the Conference on Disarmament must make a substantive contribution to global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. The European Union remains committed to this task and we expect similar commitment from all CD members. We therefore appeal to all delegations to the Conference on Disarmament to show the flexibility, which is needed by all of us, if we want to overcome the longstanding stalemate.

Mr. President,

The European Union appreciated the enhanced engagement last year between civil society and the Conference on Disarmament. We would welcome a similar approach by the Conference in 2012, thus strengthening the contribution of NGOs and research institutions to the work of the CD.

Thank you, Mr. President.