European Union

Statement by

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Conference on Disarmament

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland†, Serbia*, Albania*, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia.

Let me first congratulate you on the assumption of the post as the first President of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2013 session. It gives us great pleasure to see the representative of an EU Member State in the Chair. I would like to assure you that we will fully support you in your efforts to achieve a successful outcome of this session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing President, Ambassador Hellmut Hoffmann of Germany, for his untiring efforts in leading the Conference on Disarmament to the adoption of last session's Report to the UN General Assembly.

Mr. President,

We are deeply troubled by the continued dysfunction of a crucial part of the disarmament machinery: the on-going stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament.

We have heard again the urgent appeal made on behalf of the UNSG to this Conference to start long-overdue negotiations on a fissile material treaty as a priority. He stressed that the Conference's record of achievement is overshadowed by inertia that has now lasted for more than a decade. That must change, another year of stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament is simply unacceptable.

Similarly, in its resolution 67/72 on the Report of the Conference on Disarmament, the UN General Assembly noted with renewed concern that, despite the efforts of successive Presidents, the Conference on Disarmament has not yet succeeded in commencing its substantive work, including negotiations. The GA, once again, called upon this Conference to intensify further consultations and explore possibilities for overcoming its ongoing deadlock of well over a decade by adopting and implementing a balanced and comprehensive

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* Acceding Country Croatia and the Candidate countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
† Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.
Programme of Work at the earliest possible date during its 2013 session bearing in mind the decision on the programme of work adopted by the Conference on 29 May 2009 (CD/1864). It also requested all States members to cooperate with the successive Presidents of the Conference in their efforts to guide the Conference to the early commencement of its substantive work, including negotiations, in its 2013 session.

We fully support and endorse these appeals and will work to see effective follow-up to them. The CD, in accordance with its mandate, has a crucial role to negotiate multilateral treaties. It is in the hands of all members to restore the CD to the central role it can play in strengthening the non-proliferation regime and multilateral disarmament: we all bear the responsibility of making the CD deliver according to its mandate. Its on-going stalemate, despite recent attempts to achieve consensus such as the draft Decision on a Programme of Work (CD/1933 Rev.1) submitted for adoption in March 2012, remains deeply troubling. In this context, we continue to urge the last remaining State to join consensus in adopting a Programme of Work, which, inter alia will enable negotiations on an FMCT. We reaffirm our commitment to engage in substantive discussions on all the other core issues on the CD agenda.

Let me emphasize that for the EU, the immediate commencement and early conclusion of the negotiation in the CD on an FMCT, on the basis of the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein, and subsequently reiterated in CD/1864, remains a clear priority. Launching and concluding these negotiations are urgent and important as an essential step to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the goals of the NPT. National security concerns, while legitimate, can and should be addressed as part of the negotiation process rather than as a prerequisite. We also believe that confidence-building measures can be taken immediately, without the need to wait for the commencement of formal negotiations. This is the rationale behind our calling 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.

All EU Member States supported GA resolution 67/53 on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The mechanism established by this resolution represents a useful contribution to helping the CD without undermining its authority and primary role in multilateral disarmament negotiations. EU Member States are looking forward to working with the UN Secretary-General in this regard.

We also remain ready to engage in substantive discussions on the other items 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 arms race in outer space and on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon states against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as on other issues on the CD agenda.

The thematic discussions held last year provided an opportunity for exchanging views on the main issues of the Conference’s agenda. However, we would like to stress once again that these exchanges cannot and do not constitute a substitute to our main focus which is the adoption and implementation of a Programme of Work leading to negotiations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Germany and the Netherlands for organizing two useful technical expert meetings in May and August 2012 on FMCT in support of the early commencement of negotiations within the CD.
We would also like to reiterate EU member States' longstanding commitment to the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament. In line with GA Resolution 67/72, we underline the importance of continuing consultations on the expansion of the membership and strongly support appointing a special co-ordinator on the expansion of the CD 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.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm our strong commitment to the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community. It is clear that the adoption of a Programme of Work will require sustained political efforts from all of us. If the current standstill continues, the debate will increasingly focus on options to allow States to make progress in multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament. Therefore, 2013 should be used effectively to put the CD back on track. We cannot afford another year of fruitless consultations, procedural manoeuvres and the persistent abuse of the consensus rule. We have a clear call from the UN General Assembly to start substantial work, including negotiations in 2013. We will spare no efforts to work with you Mr. President, to achieve this goal. We urge all Member States of the Conference to engage constructively.

Thank you.