Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States

By
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Informal Consultative Meeting pursuant to A/RES/71/259

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Madam Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States at this Second informal consultative meeting of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group.

At the outset, let me thank Canada for its remarkable leadership and engagement in promoting FMCT negotiations. We commend you, Ambassador Hulan, and your team for the tireless efforts to steer this important process to a successful end.

For more than two decades, the EU and its Member States have been at the forefront of advocating 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.

We recall that there is broad support within the international community for such a Treaty considering that it would represent a significant practical contribution to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, 188 States Parties reaffirmed the urgent necessity of negotiating and bringing to a conclusion a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In this 50th anniversary year of the NPT, we expect all States Parties to act upon this commitment.

The EU and its Member States are convinced of the continued importance and relevance of an FMCT on the CD agenda. Last year’s discussions, facilitated by Germany in the Way Ahead Working Group, contributed to further understanding of the possible scope and objectives of a Treaty, definitions, verification, and legal and institutional arrangements. Again, we encourage all CD members to exert their utmost flexibility and agree on the immediate commencement of negotiations on an FMCT.

We also believe that confidence-building measures can be taken immediately, without the need to wait for the commencement of formal negotiations. Therefore, we continue to call upon all States possessing nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Madam Chairperson,

All EU Member States supported UN General Assembly Resolution 67/53 on a Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, which established the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) for the period of 2014-2015. Several EU Member States participated actively in the work of the GGE to identify areas of convergence on key aspects of a Treaty and contributed to the final consensual report. The importance of the GGE’s report was recognized in Resolution 70/39. We should continue to build on that work.

Furthermore, in 2016, all EU Member States supported UN General Assembly Resolution 71/259, presented by Canada, Germany and the Netherlands. We welcome the inclusive consultative process set up by this Resolution that will help to bring the views of the broader UN
membership to the attention of the High Level Expert Preparatory Group. Again, several EU Member States participate in the work of the High Level Expert Preparatory Group, whose mandate is to make recommendations on substantial elements for a future Treaty, without prejudice to national positions in future negotiations. We welcome this open-ended consultative meeting bringing more voices into the discussion and look forward to the outcome of the Second Session of the High Level Expert Preparatory Group which will take place in Geneva from 28 May to 8 June 2018. We will examine carefully the Group’s final report at this year’s UN General Assembly session and express our hope that negotiations in the CD can be started at the earliest opportunity.

As a powerful demonstration of our longstanding commitment in support of an FMCT, EU Foreign Ministers on 11 December 2017 decided to provide support to African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries to facilitate their participation in the FMCT consultative process. The technical implementation of this EU project, worth more than 1.2 million Euros, has been entrusted to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) through its Geneva Branch, its Regional Disarmament Branch and the three regional centres for peace and disarmament. They will reach out to as many stakeholders as possible over the next three years. Activities include, inter alia, sub-regional workshops, expert meetings, substantive support at country level, and the establishment of a repository of relevant information and publications. Preparations for the first two regional workshops under this Council Decision (2017/2284) are well underway. The first is scheduled to take place in the Caribbean region (Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, 22-23 March) and the second in the Pacific region (Bangkok, Thailand, 26-27 March). The overall aim is to facilitate dialogue at the regional level and identify national needs and policy priorities.

As an important horizontal priority for the EU, we believe that the active and equal participation and leadership of women in decision-making and action will be crucial in achieving a successful outcome for this valued process.

In conclusion, the EU and its Member States are actively contributing to these efforts through diplomatic outreach, the above-mentioned EU Council Decision, as well as various seminars and workshops with the aim to enhance knowledge and understanding of the security, political and technical issues involved.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.