Statement of the Netherlands
delivered by
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Disarmament Affairs
at
the Conference on Disarmament
on
the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament: Securing
Our Common Future

Geneva, 14 August 2018
Mr President,

Let me start by congratulating you on the assumption of the important role as President of the Conference on Disarmament. We commend you for all your efforts, including your suggestions on the work of the CD. Rest assured of my delegation’s full support.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the EU last week here in the CD on the UN Secretary-General’s ‘Agenda for Disarmament: Securing Our Common Future’ and will make the following remarks in its national capacity.

[Chapeau]
We were pleased and felt privileged to witness the launch by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, himself of his Agenda for Disarmament on 24 May 2018 here in Geneva. The Netherlands welcomes his personal engagement and focus on the topic. Indeed, the topic is timely as Cold War tensions reappear in a world that is more complex today. The Netherlands therefore supports the aims set out in the SG’s Agenda for Disarmament and shares the conviction underlying it that renewed effort is needed to address these issues. We also continue to support the role of the UN as central to these efforts.

The Netherlands is in this context in favour of discussing the issue here in the CD, and supports the proposal by the Tunisian Presidency to establish an informal working group on this matter. This Conference on Disarmament, by its name alone, deals with disarmament. So, discussing how the UN shapes this important topic, together with its Member States, is relevant and necessary. We are keen to contribute to this ongoing discussion, in the CD, and elsewhere.
Now I would like to mention a few areas along the lines of the three parts – disarmament to save humanity, that saves lives, and for future generations – as mentioned in the SG’s Agenda. These are highlights, and hence not a complete overview of the Netherlands’ position on the diverse range of issues mentioned in the Agenda for Disarmament. I will start with nuclear disarmament, then mine action and lastly cyber.

[Nuclear]
Firstly, for the Netherlands it is important to have a common vision on a pathway towards a world free of nuclear weapons. In that context, we believe it is necessary to start talking about the building blocks of a world without nuclear weapons. Additionally, we should consider external factors that influence the pace of disarmament, such as the international security environment, and seek solutions to optimise the circumstances for disarmament. The 2020 NPT Review Conference outcome should therefore include a renewed and common vision on nuclear disarmament, towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices is an important step towards this goal. The Netherlands welcomes the substantive discussions we had on this topic in the CD this year.

One of the building blocks that will be absolutely crucial for the elimination of nuclear weapons is robust options for nuclear disarmament verification. Discussing and developing such options is a real and tangible contribution to the disarmament process that we are engaged in right now through the IPNDV and the GGE. The Netherlands would like to see these initiatives being fully supported by the CD.

Risk reduction should also be a priority: it is necessary to minimise the chance of any nuclear weapon use for whatever reason. The Netherlands
has commissioned research into this issue and is now looking at next steps, focusing on options related to increasing various forms of transparency, improving communication channels, and encouraging dialogues on nuclear doctrines.

[Mine Action]
Secondly, the Netherlands agrees with the importance to focus on ‘disarmament that saves lives’. And in particular to integrate disarmament into the peace and security pillar of the UN and to link it with our efforts on sustainable development. We were pleased to have contributed with a group of countries to suggestions for the SG for this part of his agenda. In this context, we would like to highlight the important role of mine action. Humanitarian demining contributes to stability, reconstruction and socio-economic development. In addition, demining is a catalyst for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as acknowledged by the SG.

The work we do in the context of conventional weapons disarmament, and all the relevant conventions and protocols, is a crucial starting point for our global efforts and norm-setting in the field of these type of weapons. As mentioned in his report, they have promoted transparency, confidence and stability, reducing the military burden on societies. They have ensured respect for the principles of humanity and they have prevented diversion to malicious or unauthorized users.

In line with the UN activities on prevention and reduction of risks from the increasing use of Improvised Explosive Devices, the Netherlands has been involved in activities such as (non-)technical surveys, mine risk education and clearance. The Netherlands contributes to the UN’s activities and works with Mine Action NGOs that are active in a large number of countries. We share the concerns with regard to the increasing use of Improvised Explosive Devices, of which many are Anti-Personnel mines, by both states and non-state actors. We have been emphasizing this in
our international assistance policy on mines and related projects and programmes.

[**Cyber**]
Lastly, the Netherlands welcomes the SG’s engagement with Member States to help foster a culture of accountability and adherence to emerging norms, rules and principles on responsible behaviour in cyberspace. The SG’s engagement could contribute to the discussion amongst Member States on this issue gathering new momentum again.

Over the past few years UN Member States already made important progress, contributing to stability in cyberspace, especially by their arriving at two landmark GGE consensus reports. These resolved some of the more fundamental questions on the use of ICTs by states in the context of international security.

However, there have been setbacks. Malicious activity in cyberspace is still incentivised by an impression of impunity. It still occurs too regularly and with little apparent thought about the consequences for civilians and civil society. Therefore, engagement amongst the UN membership is crucial.

Many more actors need to be involved of course to ensure sustainable and stable cyberspace. Cyberspace is exemplified by an outsized role of non-state actors. Stakeholders from the private sector, civil society, and academia all have responsibilities for the cyberspace that we want to leave behind for future generations. These parties should also be involved in the discussion. Therefore, referring to the last part of the SG’s Agenda for Disarmament, we also support the strengthening of partnerships for disarmament.
Mr President,

We would like to thank you again for suggesting to address the SG’s Agenda for Disarmament here in the CD. As we indicated, we would support further discussion on the different strands in more detail in the CD as well, in particular with a view to the implementation plan the UN is working on. We, the Member States, are the United Nations, and we see this as part of a collective effort on the important issue of disarmament.

Thank you.