

1st Committee – UNGA77

Statement by the Kingdom of Belgium

Mr. Chair,

Belgium aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I have the honour to make some additional points in my national capacity.

This year's 1st Committee meeting is taking place at a low point for effective multilateralism. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine shakes the foundation of the international rules-based order. The war constitutes a gross contravention of the UN Charter and severely undermines European and global peace and security [which Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council, is meant to protect]. The illegal annexation by Russia of four additional regions in Ukraine is a blatant violation of Ukraine's national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nations cannot stay neutral in this conflict or solely lament the war's consequences. They need to take a stance and counter Moscow's attempt at redrawing the world's map by force.

Russia's provocative and dangerous nuclear rhetoric are contrary to its commitments undertaken in the framework of the NPT. We are also profoundly concerned by the serious risks resulting from Russia's attacks on Ukrainian nuclear facilities and its illegal takeover of Europe's largest nuclear power plant. We support the efforts of the IAEA to protect nuclear safety and security at those sites. We also condemn Russia's cyberattacks and its violation of the security guarantees of the Budapest Memorandum.

Mr. Chair,

Russia's war of choice affects the disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control regime in many ways. We deeply regret that the 10th NPT Review Conference could not reach consensus on an outcome document owing to the opposition of the Russian Federation at a time when it was paramount for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Nevertheless, we call on all Parties to take stock of the constructive discussions at the Review Conference and to move forward on issues such as nuclear risk reduction, disarmament verification and the strengthening of the CTBT. Progress towards the universalization of the NPT is paramount and we urge Israel, India and Pakistan to choose the right side of history and to join the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

Addressing serious proliferation crises also remains a top priority. Lack of compliance should be tackled. Refusing a return to full compliance with the JCPoA, Iran is developing its nuclear programme at alarming speed. Iran is also at odds with the legally binding obligations under its safeguards agreement with the IAEA, thus weakening the basis of the NPT's verification regime. These developments demonstrate the importance of Iran ratifying the Additional Protocol, which would be a guarantee for effective control of the nuclear programme beyond any JCPoA expiry date.

North Korea continues to flout the international rules, as demonstrated by its upsurge in missile tests and its legislative changes. Steps should be taken aimed at pursuing Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. International pressure must be maintained, including through the strict application of sanctions by all States without exception.

Chair,

We cannot be satisfied by the current pace of nuclear disarmament. Nuclear-weapon States need to undertake further action. No member of the NPT is exempt from its obligations under Article VI. We deeply regret that China rapidly increases its nuclear stockpile and fails to commit to a formal moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons' use. We call on China to acknowledge its responsibility as a global power and to engage in arms control debates as well as in a dialogue with its peers. We are also concerned by Russia's introduction of new, destabilizing delivery systems.

No state advocating disarmament can refuse to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Promoting its universalisation remains our priority. We need a legally binding and universal standard, as well as an internationally recognized and effective verification mechanism. There is no alternative to the CTBT and we are delighted that the CTBT membership is continuously growing.

Mr. Chair,

The multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation regime needs to be harnessed; this is key to preventing further deterioration of the global security situation. We look forward to strong support for resolutions dealing with the multilateral instruments such as the CTBT, the

Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. At the BTWC Ninth Review Conference later this year we will place special emphasis on the issue of biosafety and biosecurity management, for which we have introduced a working document with cross-regional support. Belgium strongly supports the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism for investigating alleged use of chemical and biological weapons. We will fight against attempts to weaken the independence of this instrument or to subject it to political adjudication.

At the fifth Review Conference of the CWC we will defend the Technical Secretariat against unjustified allegations and work for a firm footing for strengthening the taboo against chemical weapons use.

Mr. Chair,

Weapons of mass destruction strike without distinction, but conventional weapons are the ones taking lives day after day. In line with the Secretary-General's concept of "disarmament that saves lives", we should therefore strengthen conventional arms control instruments. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and the Cluster Munition Convention (CCM) save lives, day after day. More States should join those treaties. In this context, we welcome the US' recent decision to bring its policy closer in line with the Ottawa Convention.

The CCW remains a highly relevant forum in matters related to conventional arms control. It is therefore crucial, within this Convention, to keep building on past achievements and address any new development related to arms control. This is of particular importance taking into account recent challenges posed by IED's, MOTAPM and new uses of incendiary weapons and cluster munitions. You can also count on my country furthering efforts to foster consensus on a normative framework regarding autonomous weapons systems, as we have done in the past.

Mr. Chair,

We would like to laud Ireland for guiding us through difficult negotiations on a political declaration on the use of Explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). While duly taking into account existing rules, we believe this consensual political declaration will help strengthen the implementation of IHL and boost its compliance, [\[since it takes account of recent developments in armed conflict, in particular urban warfare\]](#).

Regarding security in outer space, Belgium participates in the activities of the open-ended working group on reducing space threats [through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours. Belgium] and supports the mandate of this inclusive platform aimed at developing new behaviour-centred norms and guiding principles [as precursors for a future and universally agreed regulatory framework in reducing risks of misinterpretations and miscalculations in space operations and mitigating congestion in space traffic].

[Secondly, on the matter of non-proliferation in outer space,] Belgium also supports the United States' initiative on Destructive direct-assent anti-satellite missile tests (ASAT) as a positive step to prevent space debris that disrupt in-orbit space activities and services critical for all mankind.

Finally, with regards to cybersecurity, Belgium strongly supports responsible behaviour of States in cyberspace and the implementation of the 11 norms agreed by the General Assembly. We appreciate and support the work of the OEWG and as well as the efforts by the co-sponsors of the Resolution on the Programme of Action to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs. Belgium believes that this work plays an important role in providing a safer cyberspace.

I thank you.