



EU Statement on Other Weapons of Mass Destruction
United Nations General Assembly First Committee
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Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Albania*, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Georgia, Monaco and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

This Committee meets amid a grave threat to the international peace and security, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, which the EU resolutely condemns. Atrocities being committed by the Russian forces, including indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure cause unspeakable suffering to people in Ukraine.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery remains a grave threat to international peace and security. Moreover, the risk that terrorists could access WMDs or their means of delivery also remains real. Compliance with and enforcement of international obligations applicable to these weapons therefore remains a fundamental pillar of the global effort to uphold the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and to prevent an erosion of this landscape.

Mr. Chair,

This year marked the 25th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The EU welcomes the successful and verified destruction of 99% of the declared chemical weapons stockpiles. Despite the progress made, the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons is a significant threat to international peace and security. Such an act is always a violation of international law and can amount to some of the most serious crimes of international concern - war crimes and crimes against humanity. In recent years, the world has witnessed the horrific use of chemical weapons in Syria, in the United Kingdom, in Russia, and in Malaysia. Ending impunity and ensuring accountability are crucial to restore the integrity of the established norms. The EU supports collective efforts to that end through the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

We denounce the Syrian Arab Republic's continued violation of its obligations as a State Party to the CWC and strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

To regain its rights and privileges under the Convention, Syria needs to resolve, in full cooperation with the OPCW, the pending issues with its declaration, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme, and be fully compliant with the Convention.

The EU continues to support the OPCW politically, diplomatically and financially. We remain steadfast in defending the Organisation against deliberate and baseless attacks on its integrity and credibility. We reiterate our call upon those States not yet party to the CWC to join the Convention without further delay. The EU will contribute actively to the preparation of the Fifth CWC Review Conference which will be an opportunity to consider how to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Chair,

The 10th of April this year marked the 50th Anniversary of the opening for signature of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, which is one of the major pillars of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We reaffirm our unequivocal support for the BTWC as the legally-binding norm against biological weapons and the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent their development and use. We call on all remaining States to join the Convention. The EU is firmly committed to contributing to the success of the Ninth Review Conference and to strengthen the Convention and its implementation, and to improve biosafety and biosecurity globally. The EU regards verification as a central element of a complete and effective disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We encourage the Review Conference to continue to explore the issue of verification in greater depth, taking into account developments in science and technology as well as the evolution of the threat, and we stand ourselves ready to do so.

The EU is deeply concerned by Russia's disinformation campaigns, which serve only to undermine international peace and security; as well as impeding cooperation and assistance between States Parties to these conventions. It is unacceptable that Russia, as part of its attempts to excuse its unjustifiable and unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine continues to make unsubstantiated and false claims against Ukraine, the United States, and others, attacking fully legitimate and laudable capacity building programmes in the biosecurity domain. Following the Article V Formal Consultative Meeting held in Geneva in September, the EU considers that this matter is now concluded.

The EU recognises that the only existing international independent mechanism for investigating alleged uses of biological weapons is the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism. The EU recalls its strong and long-standing support of the UNSGM and provides funding for several projects.

Mr. Chair,

UN Security Council Resolution 1540 continues to be a central pillar of the international non-proliferation architecture. We expect the ongoing review cycle to further strengthen its functioning.

In 2010, the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative was established as a worldwide capacity building programme for the mitigation of all risks related to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials or agents.

The EU reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and other WMD and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

Mr. Chair,

The EU has been a firm supporter of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation since its inception. As an integral part of the multilateral non-proliferation architecture, the HCoC is the only multilateral transparency and confidence building instrument relating to the spread of ballistic missiles, as well as space launch activities. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Code.

The EU strongly condemns the launches of ballistic missiles, which the DPRK has conducted in unprecedented numbers since the beginning of this year.

The EU recognises the crucial contribution of export control regimes towards ensuring a safer and more secure world. In that regard, we deplore the emerging discourse instigated by some UN Member States that seeks to delegitimize these critical instruments on fallacious grounds. The EU in particular recalls that the Missile Technology Control Regime plays a crucial role in tackling the proliferation of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and other unmanned aerial vehicle technologies and that all EU Member States should be allowed to join this regime. The EU strongly supports all other international export control regimes, including the Zangger Committee, the Australia Group, and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

In the interest of time I have delivered a shortened statement. Full version of this statement will be available on the First Committee website.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.