EU Statement

By

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First Committee
Thematic Discussion on Regional Disarmament and Security
United Nations General Assembly
74th Session

United Nations
New York
29 October 2019
Mr. Chair,

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

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, align themselves with this statement.

The EU will continue to work for the peaceful resolution of the problems of regional instability and insecurity and of the conflict situations. We strongly support the establishment of regional and sub-regional confidence- and security-building measures as an important tool to build trust, enhance transparency and military predictability, avoid conflict and maintain stability, especially in situations of armed confrontation and areas of tension, thereby promoting peace and security. We stress the need to advance the general arms control and disarmament processes and call for further progress on all aspects of disarmament to enhance global and regional security.

After eight years of brutal war in Syria, the formation of the Constitutional Committee is welcome news that should finally start a process of bringing peace to Syria and its people. The EU has consistently affirmed that any sustainable solution to the conflict requires a genuine political transition, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

Meanwhile, however, the conflict in north-west Syria persists, as do hostilities in other parts of Syria. Hence, the EU equally underlines the urgent need for positive developments in parallel to the work in the Constitutional Committee. The parties need to engage in confidence-building measures; they need to ensure humanitarian access and full respect for international humanitarian law; and not least, a full and lasting ceasefire must be declared across the whole of Syria.

The EU condemns, in the strongest terms, all attacks against civilian populations, and civilian infrastructure, including health, educational and water facilities, by the Syrian regime and its allies, which contravene international humanitarian law (IHL). We underline that IHL is applicable and binding to the use of all weapons. We reiterate the EU position that all the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity must be held accountable.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
In light of the Turkish military operation in north-east Syria, we recall the EU Council Conclusions of 14 October 2019 and urge Turkey again to cease the unilateral military action and to withdraw its forces. The EU condemns Turkey's military action which seriously undermines the stability and the security of the whole region, resulting in more civilians suffering and further displacement and severely hindering access to humanitarian assistance. It makes the prospects for the UN-led political process to achieve peace in Syria far more difficult. It also significantly undermines the progress achieved so far by the Global Coalition to defeat Da'esh, which remains a threat to European security as well as Turkey's, regional and international stability. In this context, the EU recalls the decision taken by Member States to immediately halt the arms export licensing to Turkey that could be used in Syria and calls on other UN Member States to do the same.

Once again, we condemn, in the strongest terms, the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Armed Forces as well as by Da’esh, as confirmed in several cases by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)/UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances violates international law and norms and there can be no impunity for their use. We recall that the Syrian Arab Republic also remains in non-compliance with its obligations as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) due to its continuing failure to address the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified by the OPCW that remain in Syria’s CW Declaration and in Syria’s failure to declare and to destroy all of its chemical weapons stocks and any remaining chemical weapon production facilities. We strongly support the professional, impartial and objective work of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), and urge the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat. The EU currently imposes restrictive measures on a total of 32 persons and two entities in the Syrian Arab Republic specifically for their role in the development, production and use of chemical weapons, in violation of the CWC.

The EU is concerned that the Syrian Arab Republic also remains non-compliant with its Safeguards Agreement under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We call on the Syrian
Arab Republic to resolve all outstanding issues in full cooperation with the IAEA and sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement without delay.

Mr. Chair,

The repeated ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), in violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, represent a grave threat to regional and international peace and security and undermine the ongoing international efforts towards lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. We call on the DPRK to immediately halt all its launches, engage in meaningful negotiations and take concrete and credible steps towards building trust and confidence and abandoning all its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We call on the DPRK to fully comply with all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and its other international obligations and commitments, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay, and to return to compliance with its safeguards obligations under the NPT. We call on all UN Member States to fully fulfil their international obligations and implement the restrictions targeting the DPRK’s illegal activities as imposed by the UN Security Council resolutions. The EU has swiftly transposed all Security Council Resolutions into EU legislation, and has also adopted rigorous autonomous sanctions, which complement and reinforce the sanctions adopted by the UN.

The EU expresses its resolute commitment to and continued support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and is determined to continue working with the international community to preserve the JCPOA, an important multilateral achievement, unanimously endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231. The JCPOA is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime crucial for regional, European and international security. The JCPOA aims at providing the international community with the necessary assurances on the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme and, in this regard, full implementation of the JCPOA remains crucial. Alongside the verified implementation by Iran of its nuclear-related commitments, the lifting of nuclear-related sanctions is an essential part of the agreement. In this context, the EU deeply regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. The EU has been consistent and clear that our commitment to the nuclear deal, including sanctions lifting for the benefit of the Iranian people depends on full compliance by Iran. We urge Iran to
reverse its recent worrying actions, as reported by the IAEA, and to return to full JCPOA compliance without delay. We expect Iran to continue providing full and timely cooperation with the IAEA and ratify the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement. Furthermore, we call upon Iran to play a constructive role in the region, to refrain from taking actions that increase regional tensions and specifically not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology, which are inconsistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2231. The EU calls upon Iran to take all the necessary measures to fully respect all relevant UN Security Council resolutions related to the transfer of missiles and relevant material and technology to State and non-State actors in the region.

We acknowledge the importance of nuclear weapon free zones for peace and security, in accordance with Article VII of the Treaty. The EU recognises that treaty-based security assurances are available to nuclear weapon free zones and encourages nuclear weapon States to sign and ratify the relevant protocols of the Treaties establishing nuclear weapon free zones drawn up following the requisite consultations. We also call on those States in existing nuclear weapon free zones that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the relevant nuclear weapon free zone treaties.

The EU reaffirms its full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. We consider the 1995 NPT Resolution valid until its goals and objectives are achieved and strongly support the outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the Middle East. We maintain the view that dialogue and building confidence among all stakeholders is the only sustainable way towards establishing such a zone, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at between all States of the region concerned. In June 2019, EU Ministers adopted a new EU Council Decision, which provides funding for the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in support of a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a WMDFZ in the Middle East. We continue to call on all States in the region, which have not yet done so, to join the NPT, the CWC and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), and to sign and ratify the CTBT. This would be an important confidence- and security-building measure and could constitute tangible steps towards the establishment of a zone.
Unfortunately, new tensions have emerged in the region already affected by too much instability and conflict. The EU has called upon all actors in the Gulf region to exercise restraint. Prompt de-escalation is necessary to minimise the risk of miscalculation, which still remains high. We expect all parties to fully abide by international law and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

In a moment of renewed tensions around Kashmir, we call on both parties to avoid escalation and encourage them to resume bilateral dialogue, with a view to finding a peaceful and political solution. Strengthening regional cooperation in South Asia is now more essential than ever.

Mr. Chair,

The European security order is based on the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of borders, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the free choice of countries in deciding their own future. Unfortunately these long-standing key principles of European security have not been respected by all.

We recall that Russia has violated its commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or sovereignty of Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 on security assurances, in connection with Ukraine's accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon State.

The EU recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, and calls upon Russia to do likewise. We urge Russia to uphold these fundamental principles that it has itself invoked many times and to contribute, by acts and public pronouncements, to stabilising the situation and reversing moves that contravene these principles. We strongly condemn the clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity by acts of aggression by the Russian armed forces since February 2014 and the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, which we will not recognise. The EU will remain committed to fully implement its non-recognition policy, including through restrictive measures.

The EU remains firm in its call on all sides to swiftly and fully implement the Minsk agreements and honour their commitments in full in order to achieve a sustainable political solution to the
conflict in line with principles and commitments of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We call on Russia to fully assume its responsibility in this regard and to use its considerable influence over the armed formations it backs to meet the Minsk commitments in full. Respect for these principles and commitments must be restored. We again call on Russia to immediately stop fuelling the conflict by providing financial and military support to the armed formations, and we remain deeply concerned about information on the presence of Russian military equipment and personnel in areas held by Russia-backed armed formations. The duration of the EU’s economic sanctions against Russia is linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The EU welcomes the recent developments in the Trilateral Contact Group, which opens the way for the holding of a Summit in "Normandy" format. The recent approval by Kyiv of the “Steinmeier formula” shows unwavering commitment of Ukraine to the peaceful conflict resolution and we call upon Russia to act likewise. We sincerely expect Moscow's constructive approach and commitment to delivering security elements of Minsk.

All European countries have highly benefited from the Conventional Arms Control and Confidence and Security Building Measures within the auspices of the OSCE and in particular the commitments in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Vienna Document 2011 and the Treaty on Open Skies. We underline the importance of fully implementing these instruments as well as the best practices contained in the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the OSCE Document on Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition and the commitments undertaken under the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

The EU supports the OSCE in its efforts to secure arms and dual-use goods in the region. In Ukraine, the OSCE and EU are supporting Ukrainian authorities with chemical safety and security. A new EU Council Decision is being considered to support Ukrainian authorities in identifying and disrupting the trafficking of weapons, ammunition and explosives. With EU support the OSCE has been supporting arms stockpile security in the Republic of North Macedonia, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus.

Building national capacities and strengthening regional cooperation remain central to our efforts, as set out in the EU Strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their
ammunition of 2018. In this context, we cooperate closely with UN regional centres and regional and sub-regional organisations.

In South East Europe, the EU continues to provide significant support for small arms control capacity building through the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) which operates under the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Furthermore, the EU supports the implementation of the Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024 that was adopted at the London summit in July 2018 and for which action plans have been agreed.

The EU strongly supports African-led efforts in the area of peace and security, including the African Union ambition to “silence the guns by 2020”. Our SALW control related activities are implemented in close partnership with the African Union, its Member States, the UN and regional organisations, notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In the context of the EU’s support for Africa's Peace and Security Architecture funded by the African Peace Facility, our assistance has helped to improve physical security and stockpile management in existing conventional arms and ammunition depots in the Central African Republic and the Sahel region, and collect and destroy arms and ammunition across West Africa. In July this year, the Council of the EU adopted a new Decision in support of an Africa-China-EU civil society dialogue on preventing the diversion of arms and ammunition in Africa.

For the first time, the EU and the League of Arab States have also entered into a partnership on capacity building in the area of arms control and countering the illicit trafficking of conventional arms. Experts from the World Customs Organization and Interpol are contributing to this effort.

In Latin America, the EU contributes to the enhancement of small arms control capacities of several Latin American and Caribbean States through the Organization of American States (OAS). Activities include amongst others stockpile management, training and legislation.
Our capacity-building activities have contributed to the overall strengthening of national export control systems worldwide, as demonstrated by the EU Outreach Project in support of the Arms Trade Treaty and the EU Council Decision on promoting effective arms export controls.

The EU also has a long history of support for actions that address the threat posed by mines, whether legacy or new contamination, and explosive remnants of war. Over the past five years, EU Institutions alone provided more than EUR 300 million to mine action activities in 24 mine contaminated countries, including Chad, Colombia, Croatia, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Myanmar, Syria and Ukraine.

Many other EU assistance activities focus on promoting universal adherence to and national implementation of key international instruments, including the CWC, the BTWC, UN Security Council Resolution 1540, and The Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation, to name just a few.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.