

The Seventh European Union Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference

Brussels, 18 - 19 December 2018

Brief Conference Report

The [Seventh EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference](#) (EUNPDC) was held on 18 and 19 December 2018 in Brussels, gathering non-proliferation, disarmament, arms control and conventional weapons experts from public institutions, international organisations, independent think tanks and civil society from the European Union (EU), associated states as well as third countries. The Conference was organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) on behalf of the [EU Consortium of Independent Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Think Tanks](#) and was attended by over 230 experts from over 50 countries and 90 research centres.

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference is one of the flagship events of the Network of independent European think tanks and research centres. The Network was established in July 2010 by the Council of the European Union to support the implementation of [the EU Strategy Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction](#). The Network now also focuses on the implementation of the [EU Strategy Against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons & Their Ammunition](#), brings together over 70 research entities and is coordinated by a Consortium of six institutes: La Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (HSFK/ PRIF), the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP).

Since 2012, the annual Conference has been one of the key non-proliferation and disarmament meetings worldwide. It has contributed to promoting strategic discussion on measures to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems, as well as to address challenges related to conventional weapons, including their illicit trade and the excessive accumulation of small arms light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition.

In his welcome address Ettore Greco, Executive Vice President of Istituto Affari Internazionali, stressed that the EU Council had decided to enlarge the Network's scope of activities so that it now includes not only non-proliferation, but also disarmament. This decision, according to Greco, reflects "the EU's ambition to play a broader role in global arms control". Greco called attention to deepening or emerging arms control challenges such as the erosion of key multilateral regimes, technological advances putting unprecedented pressures on international security and raising new concerns about escalation dangers, and the widening rift between the EU

and the US on a number of arms control issues. At the same time “the need is widely felt within the EU - he added - to examine potential adaptation of the existing arms control regimes and new instruments to ensure compliance”.

The discussion addressed numerous topics of central importance for the work of the EU and the [European External Action Service \(EEAS\)](#), including autonomous weapons, chemical disarmament, the nuclear arms control architecture, confidence and security building measures and arms control in outer space, cyber security, and the activities of [the EUCBRN Centres of Excellence](#). Special sessions were also devoted to arms trade regulation and regional challenges, that is, non-proliferation and disarmament in North-East Asia and in the Middle East.

The opening speech was delivered by Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. “Today – she said - the European Union is recognised as a global point of reference for non-proliferation and disarmament. The starting point for our work and our European approach is to treat disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation as tools of security policy, first and foremost, to look for negotiated diplomatic solutions, to even very serious security challenges”. Mogherini also reiterated the EU commitment towards non-proliferation and disarmament, stressing the importance of multilateral solutions as “the only way to guarantee non-proliferation in the long term, in a sustainable manner”, and the necessity to address regional proliferation challenges by taking measures “to enforce the existing agreements, to modernize and universalize the current architecture and to expand it with better rules and better guarantees”. The High Representative concluded by stating that “the European Union and its Member States are - and will continue to be - a driving force to preserve and strengthen the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation architecture”.

The Conference was also an occasion for speakers to share their countries’ and regional perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in the non-proliferation and disarmament arena.

According to Christopher Ford, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, the U.S. has “accelerated diplomatic efforts to solve the two most dangerous threats to the global non-proliferation regime: the DPRK nuclear and missile advancement and the proliferation challenges presented by Iran”. And while the U.S. “and our European friends have [...] fundamentally tactical disagreements on how to take action to curtail these threats [...] we do not disagree on key objectives”. Ford also addressed disarmament issues urging States not to fall “for the snake oil cure of the TPNW [[Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#)]” and stating that “new thinking on disarmament is badly needed” considering that “Russia’s destabilizing aggression in Ukraine, Georgia, and elsewhere” and China’s “robust conventional and nuclear build-up” are “directly undermine[ing] disarmament goals [...] and] creating something of a crisis for the disarmament enterprise”.

Concerns over Russia were shared by Rose Gottemoeller, NATO Deputy Secretary General, who affirmed that by violating international agreements, namely [the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces \(INF\) Treaty](#), and ignoring treaties obligations like those of [the Chemical Weapons Convention \(CWC\)](#), the Russian Federation is “eroding the security architecture”. In her speech, Gottemoeller also identified three urgent challenges: the increasing risk of nuclear weapons usage, the proliferation of ballistic and cruise missiles, and the return to the use of chemical weapons, just 100 years after their first use at Ypres, in 1917. “We need not only to protect, but to strengthen the rules-based international order [...]. The North Atlantic Alliance remains steadfast in its

engagement and commitment to support disarmament talks, develop proposals to limit and reduce conventional and nuclear weapons, and to prevent the spread of all types of weapons of mass destruction”.

The Russian perspective was provided by Vladimir Baranovskiy, from The Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMEMO). Baranovskiy affirmed that the current status of the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes and the arms control crisis cannot be imputed exclusively to Russia and that other States, including the United States, have their share of guilt. “Political will on both sides is necessary”. Giving the critical state of affairs, Baranovskiy affirmed that “it is absolutely important to keep the intellectual and political movement going” in order not to lose the achievements of the last decades. Finally, with regard to the EU, “as far as arms control is concerned[...] the EU could and should take the lead precisely because the US and Russia seem to be in a kind of mutual paralysis”.

Jacek Bylica, EEAS Principal Adviser and Special Envoy for Non-proliferation and Disarmament, focused on the principles that inspire the EU action in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament as they are expressed in the various EU documents, notably [the EU Global Strategy of 2016](#). He recalled that the EU has always promoted a cooperative multilateral approach to arms control challenges. “The global order we are defending - he said - is grounded in international law”. He also provided an overview of the EU’s political, financial and institutional tools to implement those principles, emphasizing the role played by EEAS. “We are open to work with both national and international partners” he added, noting that all the EU’s agreements with partners include a non-proliferation clause. Concerning arms control and exports control he specified that, although they remain a national prerogative, the EU has promoted, through its Code of Conduct, a convergence among national policies on a set of basic principles.

The 2018 EUNPD Conference also hosted a key-note speech by Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Arias noted that since the CWC entered into force in 1997, “undeniably, important strides have been made towards a world free of chemical weapons [...] over 96 percent of 72000 metric tonnes of declared warfare agents have been destroyed” and “193 countries are now party to the CWC. [...] However, over the past five years [...] we have all witnessed violation after violation [of the norm against the use of chemical weapons] in Syria, in Iraq, in Malaysia and in the United Kingdom”. For this reason, “addressing the re-emergence of chemical weapons’ use is now one of the crucial defining tests of the OPCW. Identification of the perpetrators of chemical weapons’ use will be an important factor to deterring further use” and “the best restraint against proliferation”. Arias concluded by stressing the importance of universalisation, considering that “as long as one country remains outside the Convention, there is a strong proliferation risk” and by confirming the OPCW’s perseverance “in its mission to rid the world of chemical weapons”.

Further speakers included the Director of the Geneva Branch of UNODA Anja Kaspersen, International Atomic Energy Agency Chief Coordinator Cornel Feruță, NATO Assistant Secretary-General Antonio Missiroli, besides renowned academics, researchers and officials from around the world.

The concluding remarks were delivered by Sybille Bauer, Director of Studies of the SIPRI Armament and Disarmament Programme. “We are in turbulent waters [...] - Bauer noted - already at the conference last year there was quite a strong sense of urgency, of crisis, of risk and fragility [...] it is really time, as some of you also said, to focus on and find what unites us not what divides us [...] and to try to identify some common landing places [...] Crisis also means opportunity [...] this [conference] is an important place where to meet, it's a place

that connects different regions, as we have seen, and it also connects different communities [...] and that is rare. The High representative has urged us to find innovative solutions, and that very much requires thinking outside the box [...] this is also something we have been doing here together at this conference” affirmed Bauer.

The EU Non-proliferation and Disarmament Conference proved to be, once again, a central event for multilateral discussion on arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. It has also reaffirmed the strong EU commitment towards the rules-based global order and showed the increased awareness of EU non-proliferation and disarmament policies among government officials, academics and civil society of third countries. Moreover, the debate explored new ways and means of improving capacities in areas of the world without great expertise in countering the threats related to SALW, WMD and their means of delivery. Finally, the Conference served as a venue to enhance the role and cohesion of European think tanks specialised in non-proliferation and disarmament.



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