

The EU, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament: Interview with Amb. Marjolijn van Deelen



Amb. Marjolijn van Deelen assumed the position of EU Special Envoy for Non-proliferation and Disarmament on 1 September 2020. In that capacity, she represents the EU in matters related to weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional export controls and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). Before joining the EU External Action Service (EEAS), she headed the Non-proliferation, Disarmament and Nuclear Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Congratulations on your recent appointment as the EU Special Envoy for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. In your view, what are the most urgent issues that the EU should address in the field of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament?

Thank you very much; I am very excited to have joined the EU at this time. There is no shortage of urgent issues. We are in full swing supporting the multilateral arms control architecture and supporting organisations such as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and smaller implementation support units or technical secretariats of conventions. We need to address how to deal with a world that is changing, both in terms of geopolitics and very fast technological developments. With multiple tools at its disposal, as political dialogue and project financing, the EU is at the forefront in shaping the agenda and developments.

The illicit traffic of SALW is a pressing concern. What measures is the EU implementing to increase transparency on exports control and accountability of arms transfer?

Indeed, small arms and light weapons are a big problem as they are the weapons that kill most people. They can be very destabilising in conflict areas, but also within the EU we have seen them used in terrorist attacks. We therefore adopted a new EU SALW Strategy in 2018, we support the UN Program of Action on SALW and also implement a number of projects in different regions to combat the illegitimate flow of small arms and light weapons and trace their origins in conflict zones. Our longstanding work in the Balkans is our flagship initiative in that regard. In a broader sense, the EU has adopted a Common Position on arms exports that is the legal framework for EU Member States' decisions on arms exports. We aim for close interaction among the Member States so that the rules of the Common Position are applied in a more convergent manner. Member States apply these highest common European standards to their arms export control decisions, including those related to the export of SALW. It is up to national institutions to hold Member States to account for their export decisions. And in a big step towards increased transparency, the EU has now published

our annual report on arms exports not only on paper, but as a [searchable database](#). This makes our information much more accessible and we hope that other countries will follow our lead in transparency on arms exports.

The norm against the use of WMD has been challenged several times recently. What actions is the EU taking to preserve such norm and what main objectives is the EU pursuing to avoid further WMD's uses in the future?

Well, we have various lines of action here. On the nuclear side, we have of course our strong support for the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), both with a focus on its Review Conference that is to be held next year as well as on the long-term support for the many instruments that support it, such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), getting to a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), developing verification methods, supporting nuclear security and safeguards and promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As the NPT is the cornerstone of our non-proliferation architecture, it is extremely important to protect it. The same is true for the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the norm against the use of chemical weapons. Unfortunately, that norm has been breached multiple times in the past years, which is unacceptable. The EU is very active in supporting the OPCW and the discussions that take place there, but has also instituted a sanctions regime specifically for the perpetrators of chemical weapons. On the biological side, we are gearing up for the next review conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BTWC). I think the current pandemic has raised the sense of urgency for reducing bio risks.

With regard to nuclear weapons, is the EU prepared to adopt a common stand during the next Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, scheduled for 2021?

Yes, we definitely are. We have had good internal discussions and looked each other in the eye - as you know, not all EU Member States have the same view of the way in which we should work towards nuclear disarmament. We are preparing our position to be adopted by the European Council, but additionally we are preparing Working Papers to submit to the Review Conference in order to push some topics further on the agenda.

The Alleged Use of Cluster Weapons in Nagorno Karabakh

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict ended with the Russian-brokered ceasefire of 9 November. While Commentators have mostly focussed on the political resolution of the conflict, which allowed Azerbaijan to recover part of its territory occupied by Armenia, the way in which the hostilities were carried out was often overlooked. Both parties have been accused by NGOs (or have blamed each other) to use forbidden weapons - namely cluster munitions, a particularly dangerous class of weapons since they explode releasing several bomblets scattered in a vast area that often remain unexploded, constituting a danger for the civilian population. Cluster weapons and their use are forbidden by the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CMM), in force since 2010. The Convention is a classic disarmament treaty with elements of humanitarian law.

While Armenia and Azerbaijan are not party to the CMM and the Convention has not yet become customary international law, such use, if confirmed, is of particular concern.

In fact, even non-parties to the CMM are still not allowed to use cluster munitions at their discretion, as they are obliged to observe international humanitarian law provisions, namely those protecting the civilian population, civilian objects and cultural property. Excessive collateral damages should be avoided.

The EU HR/VP, Josep Borrell, stated the illegality of the use of cluster munitions, affirming that the Union is ready to help with post-conflict rehabilitation. This may consist, primarily, in the elimination of remnants of war, i.e. the unexploded bomblets scattered by these weapons. The EU may also call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to accede to the CMM. The problem is that cluster munitions are often perceived as being of vital interest and a strategic balance "tool", as it is also shown by those EU countries which have not yet ratified the Convention because their neighbours (i.e. Russia, Turkey) have not done so.

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Latest Publications

The EU's Chemical Weapons Sanctions Regime: Upholding a Taboo Under Attack, Clara Portela and Erica Moret, The European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2020

Technology, Arms Control and World Order: Fundamental Change Needed, Jürgen Altmann, Toda Peace Institute, 2020

The Trust Machine: Blockchain in Nuclear Disarmament and Arms Control Verification, Lyndon Burford, Centre for Science and Security Studies at King's College London, 2020

Nuclear Deterrence Perpetuates Nuclear Risks: the Risk Reduction Perspective of TPNW Supporters, Alexander Kmentt, European Leadership Network (ELN), 2020

Network Calls

SENIOR RESEARCH POSITION, INTERNATIONAL CYBER SECURITY PROGRAMME

The Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH) is seeking one Senior Research Associate to lead its International Cyber Security research programme, launched on the 1st of December 2020.

The programme, funded by the German Federal Foreign Office, focuses on international cyber governance and (industrial) political trend analysis. Active networking with science and industry forms a third pillar of the programme.

Location: Hamburg (Germany)

For more information:

See the [job announcement](#)

Or contact Dr. Ulrich Kühn at kuehn@ifsh.de

NETWORK NEWS

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers Series

As part of its mandate, defined in Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/299 of 26 February 2018, the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium is publishing a new series of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Policy Papers. One of the latest papers is co-authored by Benjamin Jongleux (France), a Consultant with the Small Arms Survey, and Nicolas Florquin (France/US), a Senior Researcher and the Head of the Data and Analytics Unit at the Small Arms Survey.

Monitoring the Response to Converted Firearms in Europe
Summary:

Prior to the recent changes to the European Union (EU) Firearms Directive, and due to inconsistent national regulations, several types of readily convertible firearms could be purchased with few restrictions in a number of EU member states, modified into lethal weapons and trafficked within the region. This situation contributed to the growing criminal use of models that were easy to convert into lethal firearms. In response, the EU adopted a number of regulatory measures from 2017 onwards and supported joint law enforcement operations that specifically targeted trafficking in converted firearms. Based on research by the Small Arms Survey, this paper reviews these EU efforts and the evolving dynamics of firearms conversion in Europe as a whole. It argues that while EU member states are moving towards greater harmonization of their national legislation, there have been significant delays in some countries, and that the interpretation of certain standards and procedures remains inconsistent. The paper also argues that improving the strategic intelligence picture of illicit firearms trafficking in Europe remains critical for measuring the success of these efforts and for detecting emerging threats.

Read the full paper [here](#)

Previous papers can be found [here](#)

CONSORTIUM NEWS

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION: PROLIFERATION AWARENESS TRAINING COURSE

Attention all graduate and post-graduate students in the fields of biological and chemical sciences! The EUNPDC will be holding an online short course from **22 to 26 February 2021** between **9:30 and 13:00 CET**, "Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: An Introductory Course."

The course will provide an overview of the threats posed by biological, chemical and nuclear weapons (collectively known as weapons of mass destruction) and the existing international and national non-proliferation and disarmament mechanisms. The course will also examine the challenges and opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies. Prior to the in-class session, course participants will be given access to online preparatory materials.

To apply, students need to be currently enrolled in a European university, pursuing a graduate or post-graduate degree in the field of chemical or biological sciences.

Application process:

All application materials should be submitted in **English** by **15 January 2021** and include: (1) A letter of interest of no more than 500 words; (2) A letter confirming current enrollment in a graduate/post-graduate program; and (3) A record of courses taken to date and grades received.

Applications from qualified women are strongly encouraged.

All application materials and questions should be sent to apply@vcdnp.org. More information can be found on the VCDNP website at: www.vcdnp.org.