

The Thirteenth European Union

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference,

12-13 November 2024,

*Comprehensive Conference Report*

*By*

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The thirteenth EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference (EUNPDC) was held on 12 and 13 November 2024 in a hybrid format at The Hotel in Brussels (Belgium). The Conference was organised by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) on behalf of the [EU Network of Independent Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Think Tanks](https://www.nonproliferation.eu/), gathering experts on non-proliferation, disarmament, arms control and conventional weapons from public institutions, governments, international organisations, independent think tanks, and civil society. Over 600 experts from more than 60 countries – EU members, associated states, and third countries – attended the conference in person and online.

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference is one of the flagship events organized by the European Network of Independent Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Think Tanks. Established in July 2010 by the Council of the European Union, the Network was created to support the implementation of both the [EU Strategy Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:l33234) and the [EU Strategy Against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons & Their Ammunition](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13581-2018-INIT/en/pdf). With over 110 research entities involved, the Network is coordinated by a Consortium of six institutes: Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (HSFK - PRIF), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP).

Since 2012, the Annual Conference has become one of the leading global forums for non-proliferation and disarmament discussions. It has contributed to advancing strategic dialogue on measures to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems, while also addressing challenges related to conventional weapons, including the illicit trade and excessive accumulation of small arms, light weapons (SALW), and their ammunition. The 2024 edition focused on several key issues central to the EU’s work, notably within the [European External Action Service (EEAS)](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en), as well as pressing arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament issues.

The conference was structured into five plenary sessions, six parallel sessions, and two keynote speeches, which covered a wide range of topics. These included the multilateral arms control architecture, chemical disarmament, non-proliferation and disarmament in the Asia-Pacific, arms control in outer space, WMD proliferation in the Middle East, challenges to conventional arms control, emerging technologies, the future of biological weapons, the war in Ukraine, the future of non-proliferation and disarmament, and the challenges for the future NPT RevCon.

**Welcome Address**

Ettore Greco, *Executive Vice-President Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).*

Executive Vice President Greco started his remarks by noting that key components of the arms control architecture have proven resilient and, to some degree, also capable of adjusting to the new challenges. He remarked, however, that the repeated setbacks in critical arms control areas have created dangerous gaps that risk to widen even further. There is a sense of urgency around, in particular, nuclear risks. Given the poor prospect of relaunching nuclear disarmament in the short term, the request is growing for confidence-building measures that can ensure greater transparency and openness. The deteriorating nuclear order has also had a heavy negative impact on the non-proliferation regime which is based on a delicate balance of obligations. This requires, he emphasized, that experts and scholars engage in a fresh strategic debate to identify new avenues to, on the one hand, consolidate the existing agreements, on the other, promote a renewed nuclear dialogue.

**Opening Address**

Benedikta von Seherr-Thoss,*Managing Director for Peace, Security and Defence at the European External Action Service (EEAS).*

Benedikta von Seherr-Thoss highlighted the increasingly deteriorating international security environment since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. She emphasized that arms control commitments had suffered significant setbacks, including Russia’s withdrawal from key treaties and its refusal to engage in negotiations for a successor framework to New START. She expressed grave concerns over North Korea’s expanding nuclear arsenal, Iran’s advancing nuclear activities, and the broader risks of nuclear proliferation. Additionally, she addressed the current challenges to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the emerging threats posed by the use of chemical weapons, particularly in Syria and Ukraine.

While progress has been made in areas such as the Anti-Personnel Mines Ban Convention, von Seherr-Thoss noted the growing risks posed by emerging technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and space-based weapons. She stressed the need to strengthen the non-proliferation and disarmament framework through inclusive multilateralism in order to tackle these global challenges. Finally, she emphasized the EU’s commitment to supporting these efforts with concrete projects funded within its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Despite the grim outlook, von Seherr-Thoss reaffirmed the EU’s dedication to effective, step-by-step multilateralism and called for unity in defending the global order against expansionist power ambitions.

**Introductory remarks**

Petr Jelínek, *Deputy Head of Unit CFSP Operations and Election Observation at the European Commission*

Petr Jelínek, Deputy Head of Unit CFSP Operations and Election Observation at the European Commission, opened his remarks by underlying the sustained pressure facing the international rules based order and multilateralism – challenges that also affect the institutions, instruments, and regimes underpinning the international non-proliferation architecture. Jelínek reaffirmed the European Commission’s commitment to supporting non-proliferation and disarmament activities, including through the allocation of appropriate funding. He noted that the EU currently provides approximately €30 million annually to support around 30 initiatives aimed at addressing both the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as well as the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW). Jelínek stressed the importance of the annual EUNPDC conference, praising its ability to convene diverse expertise, perspectives, and insights, and highlighting the essential role of dialogue and innovation in navigating today’s complex non-proliferation landscape. Concluding his remarks, Jelínek encouraged to reflect on the shared responsibilities at this critical juncture.

**First Plenary session**

**Multilateral Arms Controls in the Era of Geopolitical Tensions**

Stephan Klement, Special Envoy for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament at EEAS, opened his address with a series of critical questions: *Where does the world stand? What are the potentials and opportunities?* Acknowledging the challenging times, marked by Russia’s ongoing war of aggression and the complete paralysis of multilateral arms control, Klement pointed to concerning trends: the modernization of nuclear arsenals, the development of increasingly sophisticated weaponry, and the expanding role of artificial intelligence in military operations. He also noted the emergence of new missile technologies, referencing their use in the Gaza conflict as evidence of evolving threats that demand urgent attention.

The session speakers highlighted the erosion of multilateral arms control frameworks amid rising geopolitical tensions and the resurgence of great power competition. Speakers emphasized the urgent need to reinforce existing treaties, such as the NPT, and to rebuild trust through transparency and dialogue. Concerns were raised about the increasing role of emerging technologies, including hypersonic weapons, AI, and autonomous systems in modern warfare. The implications of the war in Ukraine and the expansion of China’s nuclear arsenal also featured prominently in the discussion.

Finally, speakers stressed the importance of preserving European leadership in global disarmament efforts. At a time of waning international engagement., Europe continues to play a central role by investing in verification, risk reduction, and confidence-building measures – tools that are more essential than ever in an increasingly polarized global environment.

**Keynote Speech Session**

Elisande Nexon, *Senior Research Fellow at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), moderated the keynote speech session.*

In his speech, Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), underscored the importance of addressing current challenges amid rising geopolitical tensions, including the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine. Ambassador Arias reaffirmed the centrality of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime, despite the growing geostrategic challenges posed by chemical threats. He emphasized the OPCW’s achievements, such as the complete destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles in June 2023, but warned about the ongoing risks, including the potential re-emergence of chemical weapons and violations of the Convention in recent conflicts.

Arias also pointed to notable advancements, such as the inauguration of the Chemistry and Technology Centre in the Hague in 2023 and the OPCW’s proactive focus on emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence. He warned that AI could facilitate the development of more dangerous chemical weapons, and highlighted its impact on automation, nanotechnology, and the autonomous deployment of chemical agents, all of which introduce new security challenges. The OPCW is actively investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria and overseeing the destruction of abandoned Japanese arsenals in China. Additionally, it is addressing allegations of chemical riot control agent use in Ukraine.

On the role of AI in advancing the Convention, the Ambassador recalled the recent conference held in Rabat, where participants acknowledged that AI will bring substantial conceptual and practical changes to the implementation of the Convention. In conclusion, Arias urged the international community to strengthen cooperation and resources to prevent future threats, expressed his gratitude for the EU's continued support, and emphasized the OPCW's central role as a key instrument in promoting global peace and security.

**Chemical Disarmament and the Re-Emergence of the Chemical Threat**

The session Chemical Disarmament and the Re-Emergence of the Chemical Threat addressed the evolving landscape of chemical weapons threats, which are increasingly influenced by both state and non-state actors, scientific and technological advancements, and rising geopolitical competition. The speakers explored current trends, challenges, and potential solutions aimed at preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and ensuring the continued effectiveness of existing international frameworks. A key point of discussion has been the worrying resurgence of chemical weapons use in various forms, including nerve agents in targeted assassinations and the deployment of riot control agents (RCAs) in conflict zones such as Ukraine.

The speakers emphasized that over 1,000 incidents involving RCAs have been recorded, despite their use in warfare being explicitly prohibited. They stressed the need for comprehensive and transparent investigations, acknowledging both the political and technical challenges involved, particularly since formal requests for such inquiries must come from state parties. The panellists outlined four essential pillars for addressing the chemical weapons threat: ensuring that the OPCW remains fit for purpose through adequate resourcing and the integration of advanced technologies; modernizing the Chemical Weapons Convention, including updating inspection regimes and reconciling discrepancies in trade data; establishing permanent investigative and attribution capabilities within the OPCW; and pursuing accountability for chemical weapons use, while acknowledging the limitations of current international legal mechanisms.

A major topic of concern was the role of emerging technologies, especially artificial intelligence. The speakers discussed how AI could rapidly predict chemical structures, raising alarms about the potential for accelerating the development of toxic agents. However, they also recognized AI’s positive potential in enhancing chemical forensics and investigation capabilities. The challenge, they noted, lies in ensuring that these new methods meet rigorous legal and scientific standards for validation.

Several speakers stressed the importance of retaining institutional knowledge within the OPCW, particularly in light of the high staff turnover rate. They also underscored the need to continue training and preserving expertise from past investigations, such as those conducted in Syria. Additionally, they emphasized the growing role of open-source intelligence and cautioned against the risks of misinterpretation and disinformation.

The session also touched upon the importance of justice and support for victims of chemical attacks. While the OPCW's mandate primarily covers state parties, the speakers pointed out the commitment to include victim representation in key discussions. They also stressed the centrality of justice, which, although outside the OPCW’s direct remit, remains an essential component in maintaining the global norm against chemical weapons use.

Speakers concluded that while the global norm against chemical weapons use endures, signs of erosion are evident. To counter the evolving chemical threat, continued political will, technological adaptation, and international cooperation are essential. The OPCW and the CWC remain pivotal frameworks, and thus need to be modernized, adequately funded, and equipped with enhanced investigative capabilities to fulfill their mission in a rapidly changing global landscape.

**Parallel sessions**

**The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Agenda in the Asia-Pacific**

The session The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Agenda in the Asia-Pacific explored critical regional security challenges, focusing on nuclear proliferation, emerging threats, and the role of international agreements. Discussions centred on country-specific issues, such as North Korea’s nuclear developments, China’s nuclear build-up, and the implications of the AUKUS agreement.

Speakers addressed the growing security risks posed by North Korea’s nuclear and missile capabilities, particularly in light of its deepening ties with Russia. They emphasized the challenges these developments pose to regional stability and non-proliferation efforts, as well as the urgency for US and its allies to address them. Deterrence and dialogue were identified as key elements in responding to the DPRK’s nuclear strategy.

Speakers also analyzed China's nuclear developments, with particular emphasis on the credibility of its no-first-use policy and on the strategic rationale behind its nuclear expansion. The discussion addressed the risk of destabilization, particularly in relation to Taiwan and the possibility of US military involvement. Speakers recognised the importance of engagement with China to enhance transparency and foster dialogue, while pointing out that this remains primarily a responsibility of the US and other P5 states.

The session explored the 2021 AUKUS agreement and its implications for the potential risks of nuclear fuel and technology diversion. Speakers also pointed out the possibility of AUKUS reinforcing non-proliferation mechanisms through enhanced safeguards and transparency measures.

Finally, the discussion extended to other critical issues, including how the upcoming US presidential election might affect Northeast Asian security, the risk of military escalation in the South China Sea, and the significance of China joining the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

**Arms Race in the Outer Space**

The session Arms Race in the Outer Space focused on the intensifying militarization and commercialization of outer space, with speakers emphasizing how space is becoming a contested congested, and competitive domain. Speakers highlighted the inadequacy of the current legal framework, particularly the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, in addressing emerging threats such as anti-satellite weapons (ASATs), space debris proliferation, and the broader potential weaponization of space. A core debate emerged between two contrasting approaches to space governance. On the one side, Russia and China championed the adoption of legally binding measures through proposals like the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space Treaty (PPWT). On the other side, Western nations advocated for non-legally binding norms promoting responsible behaviour. The panel acknowledged that this dichotomy has stalled progress, though the recent Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) consensus report was recognized as a breakthrough, laying groundwork for future negotiations.

Speakers also highlighted the merger of two competing Open-Ended Working Groups (OEWGs), facilitated by Egypt and Brazil, as a significant diplomatic achievement that could streamline international dialogue. Additionally, the session addressed Latin America’s growing role in space governance, emphasizing its commitment to equitable access to space resources, and its demand for capacity-building initiatives to ensure responsible participation. The discussion also examined the applicability of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to space conflicts, the challenge of defining "weapons" in a dual-use environment, and the need for enhanced space traffic management to address the rising threat of orbital debris.

Finally, speakers emphasized the importance of including non-state actors – such as industry, academia, and civil society – in shaping space security policies that align with both technological advancements and global equity concerns.

**Conflict Dynamics and Risks of Proliferation of WMD and Delivery Systems in the Middle East**

The session Conflict Dynamics and Risks of Proliferation of WMD and Delivery Systems in the Middle East focused on the evolving conflict dynamics and proliferation risks of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East, with a focus on the ongoing Gaza war and shifting regional alliances. Discussions centered on nuclear deterrence strategies, Iran’s nuclear advancements, and the collapse of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Ambassador Stéphane Clément emphasized the EU’s historical dual-track approach to sanctions and incentives, emphasizing the diminishing prospects of reviving the JCPOA due to Iran’s accelerated uranium enrichment program and the erosion of IAEA oversight. Clément also considered the potential implications of a second Trump administration, particularly the potential reinstatement of maximum pressure policies.

Ambassador Karim Haggag outlined four trends contributing to what he termed the "creeping nuclearization" of the Middle East: Iran’s entrenched nuclear latency, Saudi Arabia’s nuclear hedging, the shift from diplomacy to deterrence (manifest in the US’s overt deterrence posturing and Iran’s countering "virtual deterrence" strategy), and Israel’s under-discussed vertical proliferation, particularly its advancements in delivery systems and second-strike capabilities. Haggag advocated for a comprehensive regional arms control framework, warning that ad hoc approaches risk exacerbating regional asymmetries.

Dr. Syed Hamza Savvavi described the Israel-Iran rivalry through the "game of chicken" analogy, cautioning that mutual overconfidence, religious apocalyptic narratives among Iranian policy elites, and misjudgements of resilience on both sides significantly increase the risk of uncontrolled escalation. He further argued that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential to de-escalating broader regional tensions.

The session concluded with reflections on regional initiatives, particularly the Middle East WMD-Free Zone (MEWMDFZ) conference. Speakers highlighted the importance of inclusive, multilateral security dialogues and the need for sustained international pressure to bring key non-participants, notably Israel, into engagement.

**Parallel sessions**

**Challenges to Conventional Arms Control**

This session Challenges to Conventional Arms Control examined the evolving challenges in conventional arms control, focusing on the intersection of arms exports, small arms proliferation, and global security policies. Discussions revolved around the EU’s integrated security approach, the effectiveness of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and international efforts to curb arms diversion. Speakers analyzed the EU’s three-pronged strategy, which involves harmonizing national arms export policies, funding anti-diversion projects globally (in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East), and enhancing safeguards in military aid, particularly to Ukraine.

Despite the EU’s significant role in global arms export, speakers acknowledged the block’s lack of a unified, proactive arms control policy. Speakers also discussed the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)’s humanitarian mission to prevent arms diversion to organized crime and human rights violators, stressing the urgent need for universal adherence, particularly from key non-signatories, such as the US and several Latin American states.

The discussion also reviewed key achievements of the UN Programme of Action (UNPOA) review conference, including the integration of gender and youth perspectives into arms control policies, the establishment of a new UN funding mechanism, and stronger measures to combat illicit arms diversion across the supply chain. Setbacks, reflecting geopolitical divides were acknowledged by the speakers. However, speakers also acknowledged setbacks, particularly those stemming from geopolitical divides, which continue to hinder multilateral arms control efforts. A critical debate also emerged on how the role of gender norms fuel armed violence, emphasizing the need to complement traditional supply-side arms control measures with demand-side strategies.

Finally, reflecting on Ecuador’s escalating gun violence crisis, panellists urged increased international support for security sector reforms, anti-corruption efforts, and grassroots peacebuilding efforts. Speakers warned that Ecuador, surrounded by ATT signatories, risk becoming a "black hole" for illicit arms trafficking. Throughout the session, transparency, accountability, and regional cooperation emerged as critical imperatives.

**Emerging Technologies and Arms Control**

The session Emerging Technologies and Arms Control explored the multifaceted relationship between advanced technologies and arms control frameworks, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities they present. Speakers examined how technological innovation has historically influenced arms control, while also questioning the broad categorization of emerging technologies under arms control, arguing for more precise definitions to address their unique regulatory challenges. A central theme of the discussion was the dual-use nature of such technologies, such as artificial intelligence and other cyber tools, which complicates regulation due to their simultaneous civilian and military applications.

Speakers raised concerns that emerging technologies are eroding traditional arms control regimes, particularly as digitalization and rapid innovation challenge verification methods previously reliant on physical weapons. Some panellists advocated for leveraging emerging technologies to enhance arms control efforts, such as using AI for improved data analysis or chemical weapons monitoring, while adopting risk-based governance models, drawing from civilian AI regulation approaches.

Finally, the session underscored geopolitical hurdles to achieving international consensus on regulating emerging technologies. Speakers presented differing viewpoints on the integration of emerging technologies into arms control frameworks: while some of them called for cautious optimism in leveraging these technologies to strengthen arms control, others expressed scepticism about the feasibility of adapting traditional frameworks to digital, rapidly evolving innovations.

**The Future of Biological Weapons**

The session The Future of Biological Weapons addressed the evolving challenges and risks posed by biological threats, particularly in the context of emerging biotechnologies and the limitations of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Speakers highlighted the Convention’s historical role in banning biological weapons, but underscored its lack of a robust verification mechanism, which has created persistent challenges in ensuring compliance and enforcement. Given geopolitical tensions and declining trust in multilateralism, speakers stressed the urgency of reinforcing the BWC’s institutional framework to maintain its relevance.

Panellists elaborated on the spectrum of biological risks, emphasizing how emerging technologies like synthetic biology and open-source biology have significantly increased accessibility of potentially dangerous capabilities. Comprehensive national plans combining biosafety and biosecurity strategies, involving all stakeholders to mitigate risks and respond effectively to biological incidents were recognised as crucial. Speakers also called for enhanced global disease surveillance under the WHO, improved transparency and reporting mechanisms under the BWC.

The session ended with an overview of the EU’s efforts to prevent the weaponization of naturally occurring infectious agents through initiatives like the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence.

**Second Plenary session**

**The War in Ukraine and Arms Controls**

The session The War in Ukraine and Arms Control addressed the deteriorating state of nuclear arms control between the United States and Russia, and its implications for European security. In particular, speakers underscored the impact of Russia's actions on the arms control architecture, both within the European and global context, accelerating the breakdown of long-standing agreements. The unravelling of treaties such as the New START, set to expire in February 2026, poses serious risks, especially given Russia’s current lack of interest in dialogue. The discussion emphasized the urgent need to reaffirm arms control norms and collaborate with international partners to uphold existing frameworks and explore new mechanisms.

Panellists acknowledged that arms control instruments alone cannot prevent wars but stressed their role in creating common rules, and reinforcing trust. However, arms control requires willing participants, and Russia’s current posture complicates efforts to negotiate new agreements.

The session also analyzed the broader geopolitical dimensions of the conflict, particularly the role of China, North Korea, and Iran in sustaining Russia’s war effort. Speakers reiterated NATO’s commitment to supporting Ukraine, enhancing deterrence and defense, and preserving the rules-based international order. They acknowledged that Russia has attempted to link arms control discussions to the situation in Ukraine, but its track record of non-compliance makes negotiations challenging.

Lastly, speakers underlined that the US remains open to dialogue with Russia and China on nuclear weapons without preconditions.

**The Future of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament: a Conversation between Generations**

The session The Future of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament: a Conversation between Generations discussed about the future of non-Proliferation and disarmament, emphasising the urgent need to reinforce non-proliferation mechanisms, particularly in response to emerging geopolitical tensions and technological advancements that challenge existing frameworks.

A significant portion of the discussion was dedicated to examining the limitations of current arms control treaties, particularly their adaptability to emerging threats such as cyber warfare and autonomous weapons systems. The erosion of diplomatic trust emerged as a recurring concern during the session. Participants stressed the importance of multilateral engagement in addressing nuclear risks, cautioning against reliance on unilateral deterrence strategies. The debate over the effectiveness of sanctions versus diplomatic incentives in curbing nuclear ambitions also featured prominently. While some participants advocated for renewed dialogue with non-compliant states, others emphasized the necessity of sanctions to maintain pressure on states that flout non-proliferation norms.

Further, the role of non-state actors and the illicit arms trade was highlighted as an increasingly significant security threat. The session concluded with a call for pragmatic, enforceable policies that balance security needs with disarmament commitments. Speakers warned that, without sustained political will, non-proliferation efforts risk becoming rhetorical and ineffective, rather than actionable and impactful.

**The Road to the 2026 NPT RevCon: Key Challenges and Opportunities in Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**

The session The Road to the 2026 NPT RevCon: Key Challenges and Opportunities in Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament explored the current state and future prospects of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). While some experts view the NPT as being in crisis, others believe it continues to function adequately in addressing global non-proliferation concerns. A key contribution came from the chair of the second session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, who shared valuable insights from interactions with participating states. He noted that while most countries recognize the NPT's relevance, differing views remain in how its components are implemented, particularly concerning transparency, accountability, and nuclear sharing agreements.

During the PrepCom, particular focus was placed on ongoing challenges related to nuclear sharing, as well as the situations in North Korea and Iran, which continue to generate tensions. Another critical issue discussed was the safety of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant amidst the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, with political divisions among state parties hindering consensus on stronger language in the factual summary. Despite these challenges, speakers emphasized the importance of flexibility and compromise among state parties. They urged that discussions focus on areas where progress can be achieved, while also stressing the need to avoid accidents arising from escalation, miscalculation, or miscommunication.

Further discussions highlighted the impact of Russia's de-ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on the NPT framework. Experts underscored the CTBT’s role in preventing nuclear proliferation and arms races, particularly through its robust verification regime, which has been critical to maintaining global security and stability.

**Keynote Speech Session**

Izumi Nakamitsu, *UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs*

In her address to the Conference, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, highlighted the increasingly precarious global security environment. She pointed to rising military spending, intensifying geopolitical tensions, and mounting challenges to multilateralism as key drivers of global instability. Nakamitsu emphasized the growing risks associated with nuclear arms races and nuclear testing, calling for the reinforcement of critical disarmament treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Beyond nuclear threats, Nakamitsu drew attention to emerging biological risks, stressing the importance of addressing these dangers alongside the ongoing challenges posed by technological advancements, particularly in the realm of artificial intelligence (AI). She underscored the need for a comprehensive approach to disarmament that takes into account both traditional and evolving threats.

In her closing remarks, Nakamitsu praised the European Union’s steadfast commitment to multilateral disarmament efforts. She urged all nations to collaborate more intensively in order to counter the escalating global threats, stressing that only through collective action can the international community hope to mitigate the risks posed by modern security challenges.

**Closing Remarks**

In her concluding remarks, Sibylle Bauer, Chair of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium, commended the constructive discussions that took place, particularly in the context of rising global polarization. She noted the complex and multi-faceted challenges undermining international security, stressing the urgent need for collective action.

Bauer also underscored the critical role of intergenerational dialogue in addressing security challenges. She emphasized the valuable contributions of youth-focused initiatives, such as the Consortium’s Next Generation Workshop and Mentorship Program, which often provide inspiring ideas and innovative perspectives. She called for continued engagement with young leaders and the creation of open dialogue platforms to foster strategic discussions on shared global security concerns.

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference proved, once again, to be a pivotal event in shaping international dialogue on arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament. The Conference reaffirmed the EU’s strong commitment to a rules-based global order and showed the growing recognition of EU non-proliferation and disarmament policies among government officials, academics, and civil society representatives from third countries.

Furthermore, the discussions addressed the need to improve expertise and capabilities in regions with limited resources to counter threats posed by small arms and light weapons (SALW), weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and their delivery systems. The conference also highlighted the important role played by European think tanks specializing in non-proliferation and disarmament, along with the EU Consortium’s efforts to promote and coordinate their work.

For more information and to watch the videos of the Conference, please visit the Consortium’s website: [www.nonproliferation.eu](http://www.nonproliferation.eu)

Agenda of the Conference: [eunpd\_241112-13.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eunpd_241112-13.pdf)

1. Alessandro Brusasca is an intern in the Multilateralism and Global Governance Programme at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). The report partly relies on the EUNPDC Annual Conference Brief Report prepared by Manuel Herrera. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)