

EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium

*Promoting the European network of independent
non-proliferation and disarmament think tanks*

The Fourteenth European Union
Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference,
10-11 November 2025
Brief Conference Report

By

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The fourteenth edition of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Annual Conference was held in Brussels on 10 and 11 November 2025. The conference was organised by the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) on behalf of the [EU Network of Independent Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Think Tanks](#). It brought together experts on non-proliferation, disarmament, arms control, and conventional weapons from public institutions, governments, international organisations, independent think tanks, and civil society. In total, 240 experts from 55 countries – including EU Member States, associated countries, and third countries – participated in person.

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference is one of the flagship events of the European Network of Independent Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Think Tanks. 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, which also contributes to the implementation of the [EU Strategy Against Illicit Firearms, Small Arms & Light Weapons & Their Ammunition](#), brings together 120 research institutions and is coordinated by a Consortium of six institutes: the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP).

Since 2012, the Annual Conference has established itself as one of the leading global forums on non-proliferation and disarmament. It has contributed to advancing strategic debate on measures to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems, while also addressing challenges related to conventional weapons, including their illicit trafficking and the excessive accumulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition. The 2025 edition addressed a wide range of issues of direct relevance to the European Union, particularly to

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the European External Action Service (EEAS), as well as several pressing challenges in arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament.

As in previous editions, the 2025 Annual Conference featured a broad and interdisciplinary agenda, structured around five plenary sessions, six parallel sessions, and two keynote addresses. Collectively, these sessions provided a comprehensive assessment of the current state of global arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament, while also exploring future avenues for European and international engagement.

The five plenary sessions addressed the core strategic and political challenges currently shaping the international security environment. The panel on nuclear arms control focused on the erosion of existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks, the implications of renewed arms racing among nuclear-armed states, and the prospects for restoring dialogue in an environment of misunderstanding and deep distrust. A second plenary session examined conventional arms control and pathways to enhanced cooperation. Panellists underscored the growing opportunities for cooperation in conventional arms control, while acknowledging the practical and political hurdles that remain. A third plenary session examined European security in the context of Russia's sustained invasion of Ukraine. Panellists discussed the profound implications of the war for nuclear deterrence, arms control, and non-proliferation norms, including heightened risks to nuclear safety and security. The plenary on the future of non-proliferation and disarmament featured an intergenerational dialogue between two early-career experts and two senior experts. The exchange offered complementary perspectives on the evolving challenges facing the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda, highlighting both continuity and change in analytical approaches, policy priorities, and expectations for future governance frameworks. The final plenary focused on diplomatic strategies ahead of the 2026 NPT Review Conference. Discussions centred on the prospects for rebuilding trust within the NPT community, managing expectations in a highly polarised environment, and preventing further erosion of the Treaty's credibility.

Complementing the plenary discussions, the six parallel sessions allowed for more in-depth and regionally or thematically focused exchanges. Panels on the East Asia strategic landscape analysed the evolving security dynamics driven by China's military modernisation, North Korea's expanding nuclear and missile capabilities, and shifting alliance structures in the region. The session on outer space security examined growing congestion, contestation, and militarisation in space, as well as the challenges of developing norms and rules of responsible behaviour. A panel dedicated to conflict management and regional diplomacy in the Middle East addressed ongoing proliferation risks, regional rivalries, and the prospects for confidence-building initiatives in a context marked by protracted crises and fragile security arrangements. The session on the Biological Weapons Convention assessed the state of the regime on its 50th anniversary, highlighting persistent verification gaps, emerging biological risks, and the need to strengthen institutional capacity and international cooperation. The panel on India–Pakistan relations focused on prospects for strategic stability and cooperation in South Asia, examining nuclear doctrines, crisis management mechanisms, and the risks of escalation amid recurring political and military tensions. Finally, the session on emerging technologies and the future of arms control explored how developments in artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, and autonomous systems are reshaping deterrence, warfare, and the very meaning of arms control, raising urgent questions about regulation, accountability, and governance.

During the conference, particular emphasis was placed on issues of immediate relevance and high strategic importance. Notably, a special session on nuclear security featured the participation of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Mariano Grossi. The discussion addressed challenges related to the protection of critical infrastructure in a context marked by regulatory and security fragility.

The programme also included important historical reflections, such as the 50th anniversary of the Biological Weapons Convention and the 80th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – commemorated through the words of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu. These reflections served as a call to renew the collective commitment to the principle of shared responsibility, reaffirming the inseparable link between historical memory, security ethics, and conflict prevention.

In her concluding remarks, Sibylle Bauer, Chair of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium, praised the constructive and substantive nature of the discussions despite the broader context of global polarisation. She noted that the language of international security is undergoing a profound transformation, both in its vocabulary and in the interpretive categories that underpin strategic thinking. Terms such as war, deterrence, rearmament, mistrust, and uncertainty increasingly dominate public and diplomatic discourse, while concepts such as multilateralism, trust, disarmament, and peace appear progressively marginalised. This shift, she argued, reflects a deeper paradigmatic change marked by the normalisation of confrontation and coercion at the expense of multilateral cooperation and the shared construction of security.

Among the most significant elements of the 2025 edition was the Next Generation Workshop, a long-standing and integral component of the EUNPDC's activities. Organised in parallel with the Annual Conference, the workshop brought together eight early-career researchers from around the world, who presented original research proposals addressing key contemporary challenges in non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament. The interactive format enabled participants to receive structured feedback from senior scholars, EU officials, and policy practitioners, fostering dialogue and mutual learning between academic research and policymaking.

Once again, the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Annual Conference confirmed its role as a central forum for international debate on the future of arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament. The Conference reaffirmed the EU's strong commitment to a rules-based international order and contributed to raising awareness of EU non-proliferation and disarmament policies among officials, academics, and civil society actors from third countries. It also explored new approaches to capacity-building in regions with limited expertise in addressing threats posed by SALW, WMD, and their delivery systems. Finally, the Conference provided an important platform to highlight the role of European think tanks specialising in non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as the efforts undertaken by the EU Consortium to promote coordination, analytical excellence, and policy-relevant research.

For more information and to watch the videos of the Conference, please visit the Consortium's website: www.nonproliferation.eu



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