



Conference on Disarmament

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium

Geneva, 3 March 2022

Madam President,

Allow me to first thank you for the leadership you have shown in the function of President of this conference. My delegation fully supports you in carrying out your responsibilities.

Madam President,

Belgium aligns itself to the statement delivered by France on behalf of the European Union. Belgium condemns in the strongest possible terms the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, in violation of international law as well as of the United Nations Charter. We fully support Ukraine's right to sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Russia must immediately and unconditionally cease military operations and withdraw all forces from Ukrainian territory. We also call upon Belarus to cease its participation to this attack and to abide by its international obligations, including under the NPT.

In January 2022, the P5 countries made a common statement, and agreed that "a nuclear war can not be won and must never be fought". The P5 countries explicitly stated that nuclear weapons—for as long as they continue to exist— should serve *defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war*. Russia's reference to a possible nuclear dimension in this conflict defies all of these principles. Russia is not under attack and it definitely is not preventing war. Its current behavior calls into question the responsible manner with which it professes to apply its nuclear doctrine, which inter alia states that it would only use nuclear weapons in response to nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction or when the very existence of the State would be in jeopardy. None of these conditions apply to this conflict.

The present situation augments the risk of misperception and miscalculation. It demonstrates the need for effective nuclear risk reduction measures, which cannot be based solely on declaratory assurances. Belgium reiterates its support for the concrete measures of risk reduction proposed by the Stockholm Initiative and we hope these will be supported at the review conference of the NPT.

Finally, Madam president, we call on Russia to immediately cease its attacks, including the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, as well as any use of cluster munition. Indiscriminate attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, including attacks against medical facilities, schools and all other civilian infrastructure, are a clear violation under international law, in particular International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, and violators will be held accountable. This is why Belgium joined the UK and other States in formally requesting the International Criminal Court to investigate alleged crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the Court.