

## EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium

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

E-newsletter of the European Network of Independent Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Think Tanks

### THE NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT CHALLENGES OF THE SPANISH PRESIDENCY OF THE EU, AN INTERVIEW WITH CARLOS ARAGÓN



Carlos Aragón is a career diplomat with a strong focus on disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control. He joined the Spanish diplomatic service in 2001, serving in Namibia, Norway, and Australia. As Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Spain in Tehran between 2014 and 2017, he has concentrated on these critical issues, along with export controls. From 2017 to 2022, as Deputy Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna, he continued to contribute significantly. Currently holding the position of Deputy Director General for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament at the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since August 2022, he plays a role in shaping national policies, as well as representing Spain in international fora. Carlos has also been an active participant in Spanish delegations to key groups such as the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Nuclear Suppliers Group

#### What are the priorities of the Spanish EU Presidency in the non-proliferation and disarmament field?

The work of the Spanish EU presidency on non-proliferation and disarmament (NPD) will contribute to strengthening European Unity, by advancing towards the following objectives maintain the unity of the Member States and international partners in support for Ukraine: promote a Common Foreign and Security Policy and the development of security in strategic European spaces, in complementarity and collaboration with NATO; strengthen relations with the EU's strategic partners.

Our top priority will be to contribute to the EU's common action to counteract Russia's illegal aggression against Ukraine, as well as to counter Russia's fake narratives in NPD fora, with a focus on the nuclear implications of Russia's aggression.

Secondly, the Iranian file will take up a lot of our time and effort. We will maintain our critical engagement with Iran with our eyes fixed on transition day on 18 October, as well as our support to the IAEA in clarifying the remaining safeguard issues.

We face a context defined by a general erosion of the NPD architecture, the challenges of new technologies, Russia and China expanding their nuclear arsenals and developing new weapon systems and persistent non-proliferation crises. Therefore, in line with the goals defined in the Strategic Compass, we will continue to support the centrality of the NPT, CWC and BWC.

An effective international NPD architecture entails protecting and reinforcing existing export control regimes, in close coordination with partners.

The Presidency will promote complementarity and close collaboration with NATO, in line with the Madrid Strategic Concept and the Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation of January 2023.

#### What do you think the EU and its member states can do to make the Union's role more effective in promoting non-proliferation and disarmament?

From a political, technical and financial perspective, the support of the EU and its Member States to the NPD architecture is essential and effective. It is difficult to imagine how that architecture would survive without the EU support, and we should be proud of it. But we should not be complacent.

The EU, with its focus on diversity and the defence of a rules-based international order in which peace, stability and development prevail, is in a very good position to engage with partners around the world to advance our priorities in NPD. If we want to reinforce the existing architecture and revert the current negative trend, we should intensify our outreach in different regions to counter the narratives of China and Russia, which are questioning the basis of the existing architecture and eroding it.

#### The Stockholm Initiative, which aims to encourage discussions on how to advance nuclear disarmament diplomacy, has suffered from leadership problems. What can be done, in your view, to revive the Initiative and how can Spain and the EU contribute to that effort?

Under the chairmanship of Sweden and Germany and the active participation of all its members, the Stockholm Initiative continues to make relevant contributions to nuclear disarmament. During the 2022 Review Conference, many State Parties perceived its two working papers, Stepping Stones and Nuclear Risk Reduction Package as valuable practical proposals to advance towards nuclear disarmament, integrating the views of countries with very different views on nuclear disarmament.

The debates during the recent first session of the PrepCom shows that a cross-regional approach integrating different views is more relevant than ever. Therefore, there is no need to revive the Initiative, which has continued to be active during the start of this review cycle, but to build on the work already done and find new points of convergence, which would allow the Initiative to continue building bridges between the different approaches to the common aim of nuclear disarmament.

The enriching diversity within the EU puts it and all its member States in a privileged position to build those bridges.

### EU'S ROLE IN MITIGATING CBRN THREATS

The role of the European Union in the management of CBRN threats and risks (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) comprises a wide array of initiatives. Due to the very nature of the CBRN domain, major actions have been taken which deal not only with security but also with health, food, trade, environment.

Major initiatives to be mentioned date back to the early 2000s. In the context of the increasing concern for the terror attacks after 9/11, the EU adopted its Counter-Terrorism Strategy in December 2005. The Strategy mentions the importance of cooperation among partners and international organisations against the spread of CBRN material, together with technical assistance on protective security.

Following the Counter-terrorism Strategy, in 2009 the EU adopted its first EU CBRN Action Plan, with the overall goal of adopting an all-hazard approach against CBRN incidents, regardless their natural or man-made origin. The 2009 EU CBRN Action Plan was updated in 2017 with a reinforced call for closer cooperation at EU level and for information exchange among Member States on CBRN incidents, threats, equipment and technologies developed. In addition, the document encouraged cross-border and cross-sector training as one of the initiatives with the greatest added value for the EU.

After the attacks which hit the EU public spaces, malls and outdoors markets such as in Niece and Berlin in 2016, and in Manchester in 2017, the EU took actions to further protect such so called "soft targets", with the adoption of the EU Action Plan to support Member States and provide guidance in the protection of public spaces. With the Plan, the EU also launched specific funding through the Internal Security Fund of DG HOME to support transnational projects improving the protection of public space and the capacity to detect explosives, firearms and CBRN material brought into such public areas.

With reference to the external dimension of its action, the European Commission created in 2010 the EU CBRN Risk mitigation Centres of Excellence initiatives (CBRN CoE). The CBRN CoE currently encompasses 64 countries worldwide and it is funded in the framework of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe. This initiative aims at capacity building and cooperation through needs and risk assessments, national and regional action plans, training and exercise.

Cooperation and solidarity among EU Member States are also at the basis of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (EUCPM). The EU Civil Protection Mechanism has, among its capacities, strategic reserves provided by the Member States to bolster the EU's readiness and reaction to CBRN events, including detection and identification tools, protection and decontamination items, medical countermeasures. It was established in 2001 and reinforced in 2019 with the launch of rescEU, an EU- fully funded emergency reserve. Among the most recent mobilization of the mechanism, with the Covid-19 pandemic, it was activated to distribute equipment among Member States and, in response to the conflict in Ukraine, it has launched the largest emergency operation since its establishment, delivering specific CBRN items such as protective suits and decontaminants.

With CBRN incidents being inherently trans-national in nature, the European Union has a significant role to play to support both its Member States and partner countries worldwide, through its institutions and coordinating frameworks in all phases of the crises management cycle, from prevention to recovery.

Paola Tessari, Senior Researcher, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

# Latest Publications

[Artificial Intelligence and Arms Control – How and Where to Have the Discussion](#). Simon Cleobury. Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP). July 2023

[Understanding the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons: New findings from recent scholarship](#). Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Republic of Austria & University of York. July 2023

[The EU space strategy for security and defence: towards strategic autonomy?](#). Raúl González Muñoz and Clara Portela. EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers. June 2023

## Network Calls

The Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) is offering a position as researcher for the CBW Network for a Comprehensive Reinforcement of Norms against Chemical and Biological Weapons (CBWNet)

More info: [Here](#)

The Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) is offering a position as researcher for the Group on Chemical and Biological Weapons Control

More info: [Here](#)

## EU NEWS

### EU REACTS, TOGETHER WITH THE G7, TO NORTH KOREA'S LAUNCH OF BALLISTIC MISSILE

THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF CANADA, FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY, JAPAN, THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE UNITED STATES AND THE EUROPEAN UNION HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR FOREIGN POLICY JOINTLY CONDEMNED NORTH KOREA'S LAUNCH OF BALLISTIC MISSILE TECHNOLOGY ON 24 AUGUST 2023. ACCORDING TO THE COMMUNIQUÉ, THIS LAUNCH CONSTITUTES A CLEAR VIOLATION OF MULTIPLE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC) RESOLUTIONS AND POSES A SERIOUS THREAT TO REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY.

DESPITE REPEATED CALLS BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, NORTH KOREA CONTINUES TO ESCALATE ITS ESCALATORY ACTIONS THROUGH A RECORD NUMBER OF BALLISTIC MISSILE LAUNCHES, WHICH ONLY TESTIFY TO ITS DETERMINATION TO ADVANCE AND DIVERSIFY ITS ILLEGAL NUCLEAR AND BALLISTIC MISSILE CAPABILITIES. THE G7 AND THE EU REITERATED ONCE AGAIN THE DEMAND THAT NORTH KOREA ABANDON ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS, EXISTING NUCLEAR PROGRAMMES AND ANY OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAMMES IN A COMPLETE, VERIFIABLE AND IRREVERSIBLE MANNER AND COMPLY FULLY WITH ALL OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE RELEVANT UNSC RESOLUTIONS; AND NOTED THAT NORTH KOREA CANNOT AND WILL NEVER HAVE THE STATUS OF A NUCLEAR WEAPON STATE UNDER THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (NPT).

THEY ALSO INDICATED THAT NORTH KOREA'S ACTIONS MUST RECEIVE A SWIFT, UNITED AND FORCEFUL INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE, ESPECIALLY FROM THE UNSC, AS THE FREQUENCY OF NORTH KOREA'S REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF UNSC RESOLUTIONS, JUXTAPOSED WITH THE CORRESPONDING INACTION BY THE UNSC DUE TO OBSTRUCTION BY SOME MEMBERS, IS CAUSE FOR GREAT ALARM, AND URGED UNSC MEMBERS TO HONOUR THEIR COMMITMENTS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY. THEY ALSO CALLED ON NORTH KOREA TO ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL DIPLOMACY AND TO ACCEPT THE REPEATED OFFERS OF DIALOGUE MADE BY JAPAN, THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS.

THEY DEPLORED NORTH KOREA'S DECISION TO DIVERT ITS LIMITED RESOURCES TO FUND ITS ILLEGAL WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAMMES, THEREBY AGGRAVATING THE SUFFERING OF THE NORTH KOREAN POPULATION AND CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES.

THE G7 AND THE EU REMAINED COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH ALL RELEVANT PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF PEACE AND STABILITY ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND TO UPHOLD THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER BASED ON THE RULE OF LAW.

MORE INFO: [HERE](#)

## NETWORK NEWS

### 61ST COURSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR DISARMAMENT AND CONFLICT RESEARCH (ISODARCO)

THE 2024 ISODARCO COURSE WILL EXAMINE THE GLOBAL NUCLEAR ORDER IN THE LIGHT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE, FOCUSING ON THE STATES, POLICIES AND TECHNOLOGIES THAT WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE IN A MUCH MORE CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT.

MORE INFO: [HERE](#)

### CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS: THE INTERCONNECTIVITY OF NORMS

THE UPCOMING CBWNET CONFERENCE 'CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS: THE INTERCONNECTIVITY OF NORMS' ON 23-24 OCTOBER AT THE JUSTUS-LIEBIG UNIVERSITY GIEßEN, GERMANY WILL SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE RELEVANT NORMATIVE REGIMES FOR CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS AND ESPECIALLY HOW DIFFERENT NORMS AND LEVELS OF NORMS INTERACT WITH ONE ANOTHER.

MORE INFO: [HERE](#)