Challenges and prospects for multilateral Weapons of Mass Destruction arms control and disarmament regimes

2020/2001(INI) - 17/11/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by Sven MIKSER (S&D, EE) on the challenges and prospects for multilateral weapons of mass destruction arms control and disarmament regimes.

Progress towards disarmament and non-proliferation

Members reiterated their commitment to the preservation of **effective international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation regimes** as a cornerstone of global and European security. They confirmed their commitment to pursuing policies designed to move the reduction and elimination of all nuclear arsenals forward and to create conditions to achieve a world free of nuclear, chemical, biological or radiological weapons. They called for a renewed arms control and disarmament multilateral order that involves all players.

Concerned about the rapid development of new potentially destabilising systems, such as weapons systems with artificial intelligence, Members stressed the need to address, in particular, the issue of **hypersonic missile and drone technology**, which increases the risk of nuclear weapons being used in response to an attack.

Arms control treaties

Members are also concerned that the withdrawal or non-renewal of key arms control treaties could seriously undermine international arms control regimes. They called on all nuclear-weapon states to reduce the role and importance of nuclear weapons in their military doctrines, while welcoming the intention of the United States to assess ways to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in its national security strategy.

Stressing the importance of the **Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**, to which 191 States are party, the report emphasised the need to ensure its effectiveness and called on all States to sign, accede to and commit to the NPT. It called on the Council to advocate that the European Union speak with one voice in international disarmament and non-proliferation fora and to promote confidence-building measures among all NPT parties. EU delegations are urged to put disarmament issues at the top of the agenda in its political dialogue with third countries.

Members welcomed the EU's commitment to helping create a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the **Middle East**. They reaffirmed their desire to work towards the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately cease its nuclear and missile activities and other WMD-related programmes.

Stressing the essential role played by the **International Atomic Energy Agency** (IAEA) in monitoring and verifying Iran's compliance with the safeguards agreement, Members recalled that the Agency's verification activities are essential to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, calling on states that have not yet done so to ratify and implement the IAEA Additional Protocol without delay.

USA, Russia, China

Members regretted the withdrawal of the United States and Russia from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) following Russia's persistent non-compliance with the treaty. They are particularly concerned about the possible **re-emergence of ground-based intermediate-range missiles in the European theatre of operations**, as well as a new arms race and remilitarisation in Europe. They urged both countries to establish an ambitious basis for resuming negotiations on a new arms control architecture. Members welcomed the decision by the US and Russia to extend the **New START Treaty** as an important contribution to the 10th NPT Review Conference.

The report noted with concern the ongoing modernisation and expansion of China's nuclear arsenal, including nuclear-capable hypersonic missiles. China is urged to engage actively and in good faith in international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations.

Chemical weapons

Particularly concerned about the increased ability of some state and non-state actors to produce banned chemical agents more rapidly, with limited indicators of detection, Members stressed the need to **uphold the global ethical norm against chemical weapons** by preventing impunity for their use. The EU global human rights sanction regime is to be used effectively in order to uphold this norm.

Members reiterated their deep concern about the attempted assassinations of Alexei Navalny and Sergei and Yulia Skripal, using the banned nerve agent Novichok, which is considered a chemical weapon under the **Chemical Weapons Convention** (CWC). They strongly condemned the development and large-scale use of chemical weapons by states that are members of the CWC, and condemned the numerous human rights violations and atrocities committed by the regime of the Syrian Arab Republic of Bashar Al-Assad.

Lastly, Members reaffirmed their full support for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), which prohibits the use of dangerous viruses, bacteria and toxic substances against humans.