Chapter 3

The Risks of Nuclear Proliferation: Addressing the Challenge

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Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to intervene at this panel of the “Amaldi Conference” dedicated to “New and evolving voices in arms control and disarmament” and chaired by the President emeritus of the Accademia dei Lincei, Prof. Alberto Quadrio Curzio. I am particularly glad to be here today with an eminent scientific expert from the Ministry of Defense of the United Kingdom, Prof. Robin Grimes, and with the Executive Secretary Emeritus of the CTBTO, Ambassador Tibor Tóth.

This year, the “Amaldi Conference” falls within the preparatory process towards the 2020 Review Conference of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). As in previous interventions, I would like to emphasize the central role of the Treaty in underpinning the global nuclear non proliferation regime. The NPT three pillars structure is well balanced and mutually reinforcing. Let me also underline that (i) nuclear disarmament, (ii) non-proliferation and (iii) peaceful uses of nuclear energy are definitely of equal importance.

In view of the 2020 Conference, Italy believes that the Action Plan agreed in 2010 has to be implemented in a full, balanced and comprehensive manner. What can still be done in the framework of the Action Plan and what additional measures may be undertaken will have to be part of the reflection of the Review Conference.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons represents today a major threat to international security. The existence of programmes to develop such weapons, the action of criminal proliferation networks, the difficulty of securing sensitive materials and the risk that non-state actors and terrorist groups might get access to them remain major challenges to cope with.

In this respect, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) system of safeguards—multilateral, impartial, professional and responsible as it is—represents a fundamental guarantee for our common security. In all relevant international fora,

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Italy promotes the universalization of the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements together with an Additional Protocol as the international verification standard. Italy systematically calls on all States who have not yet done so to sign and bring into force the Additional Protocol and, where relevant, adopt the modified Small Quantities Protocol.

Let me indeed recall that the Model Additional Protocol significantly increases IAEA's ability to verify the peaceful use of all nuclear material in States with comprehensive safeguards agreements.

This draws me to evaluate with you the current status of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, under which Iran has committed *inter alia* to provisionally apply the Additional Protocol in relation to the verification of its nuclear-related obligations.

The JCPOA is a key element of the global non-proliferation architecture and an achievement of multilateral diplomacy endorsed by UNSCR 2231. I am therefore deeply concerned by the severe difficulties, to which it is nowadays exposed. Its implementation remains crucial for regional and international security. Iran should return to full compliance without delay.

Let me also stress that Italy is ready to support all initiatives aimed at restoring the JCPOA's integrity and de-escalating the present tensions in the region. In this regard, I am personally involved in a potentially helpful exercise of dialogue in relation to the situation in Yemen, whereby France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom seat together with Iran to address possible solutions for the conflict.

Let me also recall the long-standing support by Italy to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. We continue to believe that the zone should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among all the States of the concerned region. We are ready to engage with all relevant players to achieve that.

In terms of challenges to the global non proliferation regime, North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes remain an issue of serious concern. We positively consider the dialogue launched by the US Administration with the leadership of North Korea. However, we strongly believe that the current sanction regime should remain in place as long as Pyongyang does not undertake concrete steps towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Among these steps, we of course envisage the return to the NPT, the implementation of the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements together with an Additional Protocol, and the signature and ratification of the CTBT.

The global non proliferation regime is under pressure also in relation to the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery to—and through—non-state actors.

This is why Italy strongly supports the full and universal implementation of UNSCR 1540 (2004) and its follow-on Resolutions, as well as the role of the 1540 Committee in facilitating technical assistance for appropriate domestic controls over WMD related materials in order to prevent their illicit trafficking.

Italy is also considerably engaged in relevant international non-proliferation partnerships, notably the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and its Mediterranean Initiative. We hosted a table top exercise in Rome in 2016 and organized a *livex*

naval exercise at the port of Catania in 2018. Both exercises gathered many high level officials from PSI partners to share expertise, best practices and resources to build robust capacities among partners for combating illegal trafficking of dual use items, dismantling smuggling networks and conducting interdiction operations under an established and functioning cooperative framework in accordance with international law. In the light of this strong commitment under the PSI framework, Italy has accepted to take over the Presidency of the PSI Operational Expert Group for 2020 (this is the coordination core group of the Initiative).

Italy remains committed to the achievement of a better international nuclear security environment. Ensuring the highest levels of nuclear security is a shared interest of the international community. We strongly support the central role of the IAEA in the global nuclear security framework and we encourage all States to fulfil their nuclear security responsibilities.

Italy has ratified the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT). We actively participate in the activities of the Nuclear Security Contact Group (NSCG), in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and in other relevant international and European initiatives.

As a further demonstration of our commitment to promote a nuclear security culture and capacity building worldwide, Italy has been funding over the last years the International School on Nuclear Security, jointly run by the IAEA and the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste. The School is highly valued by developing and emerging countries, for its contribution to the development of a cadre of professionals in the national framework governing nuclear safety and security.

Against this backdrop, we look forward to the next International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS), which will take place in February 2020, as an important opportunity to build on experiences and achievements and devise future directions, approaches and priorities for nuclear security.

Let me finally recall the need to recognize the changing nature of the existing threat, react, adapt and step up our efforts for reinforcing the global non-proliferation regime. Risks may indeed arise from a variety of sources: states aspiring to possess nuclear weapons; non-state actors in search of “dirty bombs”; poor national legislation in place to prevent illicit trafficking of materials and dismantle proliferation networks, as well as from mismanagement and misuse of rapid development of science and technology.

I would like therefore to conclude this intervention by highlighting the importance of further analysis and research in the field of non-proliferation. In this respect, the traditional bi-annual gathering of the “Amaldi Conference” is an excellent opportunity of debate and analysis among international high-level experts and officials.

Let me also recall the EU Consortium of non proliferation and disarmament think tanks, which is very well placed for such endeavour of research. I am particularly pleased that as of 2018 the Rome-based International Affairs Institute is part of the Consortium and is the leading think tank for the international non-proliferation

conference, which many of you annually attend (this year is foreseen for December in Brussels).

Thank you for your attention.

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