Friends of Europe Transatlantic Security Jam 2020

*Our common security in a post-COVID world*

Statement by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

New York (Online)
13 May 2020
Geostrategic trends before the pandemic already painted a complex picture. The ‘post-Cold War’ era is over, and our new reality is far less stable. It is defined by fraying relations and declining trust as States choose military competition over diplomacy. The danger to civilians posed by increasingly sophisticated weapons is growing. The possible use of nuclear weapons is greater than it has been in decades.

The current global public health crisis means it is ever more important for States to rethink and redirect global military spending towards an effective people-centred crisis response. As recent studies have shown, a 1 per cent increase in military spending results in a 0.62 per cent decrease in health spending. Continuing on the worrying path of increased national military spending means diverting necessary resources away from the COVID-19 crisis response with a devastating impact on populations and sustainable development, particularly for those in the Global South. This is an issue on which EU nations can play a leading role.

Reducing and eliminating the dangers posed by weapons requires new thinking, especially if we are to avoid the possibility of nuclear catastrophe. New thinking needs to consider new actors, dynamics and technologies. It requires new ideas for strengthening norms and compliance. It should consider and build on the gains already made in disarmament to avoid unconstrained competition.

COVID-19 has taught us that global crises require trust and cooperation, and strong institutions. With a focus on human security, these are the principles on which new approaches to disarmament should be based.

In the nuclear realm, as supporters of disarmament, as the home to a nuclear-weapon State, and as many nuclear allies, the EU can be an advocate for the necessary restraint and dialogue. It can use its combined expertise to develop innovative solutions in areas such as verification. The Tenth NPT Review Conference is an important opportunity for the EU to demonstrate this leadership.