

Security, stability and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

Thank you, Madam President, and thank you USG Nakamitsu for your briefing.

Colleagues, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed by the United States and Soviet Union in 1987, eliminated an entire category of missiles, those capable of travelling 500 to 5500km. It was one of the key achievements of post-Cold War arms control in Europe and delivered greater security and stability, not just for Europe, but for the entire world.

Over a long period, Russia violated the INF Treaty by secretly developing and deploying non-compliant missiles; specifically a mobile-launch missile system, the 9M729. These missiles are hard to find, rapidly deployable and can target European cities with conventional or nuclear warheads. Russia refused to acknowledge their existence until the US identified the missile using its Russian designation. Russia's only subsequent attempt at openness was a stage-managed offer to demonstrate the missile's alleged compliance. This would have taken place under contrived conditions and it would have been impossible to assess the range of the missile.

On 1 February 2019, the United States announced its intention to suspend its obligations under INF, thereby triggering a six-month withdrawal process, which concluded on the 2nd August with the lapse of the Treaty. Russia bears sole responsibility for the Treaty's demise; the UK and NATO Allies fully supported the US decision to withdraw.

In the last five years, many diplomatic efforts have been made to persuade Russia to return to compliance; the US raised this issue with Russia over thirty times and NATO Allies reached out unsuccessfully via the NATO Russia Council. Russia, however, has remained defiant, focusing its narrative on denial of the facts and counter-accusations, the likes of which we have heard once again today.

On the 2nd August, when the INF Treaty lapsed, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that "we will not mirror what Russia does, we do not want a new arms race, and we have no intention to deploy new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe". He explained that NATO will respond to Russia's aggressive actions, but "everything we do will be balanced, coordinated and defensive".

We support the United States' explanation of the timeline for development of its recently tested ground launched cruise missile and do not believe that the US was at any time non-compliant with INF.

Madam President, as a permanent member of this Council, Russia has the responsibility to play a vital role in promoting international stability.

However, this behaviour once again undermines Russia's claim that it is a responsible international partner, upholding international peace and security. Russia's present actions are in line with a pattern of aggression that represents a clear threat to international peace and security.

Thank you.