



Opening Remarks

Young Women and Next Generation Initiative (YWNGI) Event

Brussels, 14 April 2025 (15:00 - 15:15)

Good afternoon everyone, and a warm welcome to all of you joining us here in Brussels and online. It's a pleasure to open this first Mentorship Alumni Regional Meeting under the Young Women and Next Generation Initiative – a programme that reflects a shared commitment to the future of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control.

This initiative was made possible through the dedication of the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation and the Institute of International Affairs, under the independent network of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium funded by the EU. We are grateful to all partners and participants for bringing this vision to life.

This mentorship programme was launched with a clear vision - to encourage and support young women to enter and grow in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control. The programme is built on the belief that your voices, your insights, and your ideas are essential to tackling the challenges we face today.

This belief is central to the EU's approach. The EU has long recognised young people as powerful agents of change in promoting global peace and security. Through initiatives like this one, and policies such as the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy and the Youth Action Plan in EU External Action, the EU has made a sustained effort to empower the next generation efforts through education, research and engagement. We believe that empowering youth - especially young women - is not just the right thing to do, but a strategic imperative for building resilient, inclusive security frameworks.

This approach recognises that our collective security depends not only on institutions and policies, but also on the networks of people committed to making a difference. Our work in disarmament and non-proliferation is no exception. The risks we face in this domain—be it the spread of weapons of mass destruction, emerging technologies, or arms diversion—demand inclusive, innovative responses. And that means drawing on the talent and perspectives of the next generation.

That's why the EU is proud to support initiatives like the Young Women and Next Generation Initiative —and to see how it has grown from a pilot project into a growing community of young female experts and future leaders. Many of you, alumni and even current mentees, have already gone on to work in international organisations, national governments, academia, and civil society - demonstrating the tangible impact of investing in mentorship and in creating opportunities.

To all of you - mentees, mentors, and alumni - I want to thank you for your enthusiasm, your commitment, and your contributions to this field. Whether you're just starting your journey in this field or already charting your path, know that you are part of a wider community, and that your efforts matter.

We hope today's meeting will not only reconnect you with your peers and mentors, but also inspire new collaborations, new ideas, and renewed motivation. We look forward to seeing how you shape the future of this field.

Thank you.