Thank you Mme Chair,

I have asked for the floor to explain Canada's decision to abstain on resolution L.54.

Canada strongly supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We consider these to be important contributions both to nuclear disarmament and to nuclear non-proliferation, and thus valuable measures to enhance international security.

In the particular case of Central Asia, we are also very much in favour of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone. As the first such zone located entirely in the northern hemisphere, and one which includes a state, Kazakhstan, which renounced possession of nuclear weapons and joined the NPT as a non-nuclear Weapons State, a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone will be a welcome addition to similar zones that have already been established in Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific. It will also set a clear example that other regions, where nuclear weapons have been stationed in the past, can follow in future.

Canada believes however that some more work is needed before this laudable enterprise can be fully realized. Article 12 of the Semipalatinsk Treaty has raised concerns about the impact of pre-existing security arrangements on the Treaty and its core purpose, and this ambiguity has prompted Canada's abstention at this time. On the other hand, the process of resolving this question seems to be relatively straightforward, and the states of the region are ready to pursue further negotiations with the interested parties to this end. We thus very much hope that a solution can be arrived at expeditiously and count on the goodwill of all involved to make this happen.