Mr. Chair,

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention are indeed two critical cornerstones of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. They have both established fundamental norms on disarmament and non-proliferation, and hence crucial instruments in reaching a world free of weapons of mass destruction. We would also highlight the Security Council Resolution 1540 which is essential in realizing our common disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

2011 is a critical year for the Biological Weapons Convention. The upcoming Review Conference must build on the positive momentum created five years ago and consider ways to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

Indeed, the BWC has clearly contributed in setting a constructive tone in multilateral arms control diplomacy. This was undoubtedly demonstrated when States Parties in 2006 agreed on a pragmatic intersessional work programme focusing on selected topics. In our view, the work programme which BWC Review Conference approved in 2006, proved very useful. The BWC Conference showed that it was possible to put aside past differences and focus on areas where State Parties could unite in constructive ways. Norway has been fully engaged in the intersessional process, and we have had a fruitful cooperation with Indonesia and the Implementation Support Unit in implementing areas of the program of work.

But we need to continue to explore innovative ways to further strengthen the BWC regime, and there are many topics that we will need to deliberate and consent upon in December.

Mr Chair
Let me draw the attention to some of them.
We need to agree upon a new intersessional programme that allows States Parties to address both existing and emerging challenges in the next coming years. In that regard we should also look at how the intersessional format could possibly be improved.

We must clearly make greater efforts to universalise the BTWC, and we need to look at how the confidence-building measures can be refined and utilized to better reflect current needs. In this regard I am pleased to refer to the German-Swiss- Norwegian proposal on the revision of existing CBMs which has been put forward for the upcoming Conference, as a part of a process to increase the universality, transparency and functionality of the Confidence Building Measures.

We should also take a closer look at how we can ensure that the Convention keep pace with the rapid developments in science and technology by strengthening the practical collaboration between the scientific and disarmament communities.

Another important item on the upcoming agenda will be to ensure better coordination of cooperation and assistance by the continued implementation of article X.

Lastly, we would also highlight the importance of maintaining a strong ISU for the convention as this unit has proved so valuable for the health of the convention. The ISU and its continued mandate need to be confirmed and, if possible, strengthened at the forthcoming Review Conference.

When the States Parties come together in Geneva at the Review Conference in December, we should all in partnership ensure that we will build a robust and strong Convention for the forthcoming years. Let me assure you that Norway will contribute to this end.

Mr. Chair
Let me also take the opportunity to make a few remarks about the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In our view the CWC has since its entry into force fourteen years ago proved to be a successful multilateral tool. Almost three-quarters of the declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed, while most of the former production facilities have been destroyed or converted into peaceful purposes. Yet, we must recognise that more efforts are needed to ensure that the CWC convention meets its full potential. And we are all aware of challenges ahead of us as the deadline for the completion of elimination of stockpiles is only a few months away. We urge the states that have stockpiles to do their outmost in this respect. At the same time all states parties have a joint responsibility to find constructive ways forward and to ensure that the Convention is not left in a stalemate.
Verification is one of the comparative advantages of the Convention. In that regard we urge all states parties to submit complete and accurate declarations to the Technical Secretariat, as this is essential in order to validate compliance. Moreover, we believe the inspections under the convention should include other chemical production facilities which are of high relevance to the Convention, and further to ensure that the mechanism of challenge inspections is fully operational. Let me also reiterate that the use of chemical agents not prohibited by the CWC must not undermine the norms set by the Convention.

I would also take the opportunity to thank Director General Ahmet Uzumucu for initiating a process on the future priorities of the OPCW through an International Advisory Panel. The report that was presented by the International Advisory Panel and its Chairman, Ambassador Ekeus, earlier this year gives indeed valuable and important recommendations.

Mr Chair
Lastly, a few words on the prevention of arms race in outer space as it is an urgent issue. There is a window of opportunity to deal with this agenda in a preventive manner. Unless not dealt with soon, we will gradually be confronted by an increasing number of countries claiming national security interest as an excuse for inaction. We must avoid this becoming a reality, making PAROS even less ripe for negotiations in the future than in the current setting. It is our joint responsibility today to do all we can to avoid escalating complications for the future. Hence, we have supported resolutions in the UN General Assembly calling for action, and we are grateful for the work carried out by the EU on a code of conduct for outer space activities, and we look forward to the work of the governmental experts to be commenced in 2012.

In concluding Norway would like to reiterate the importance of engaging the civil society in the promotion and implementation of the BWC and the CWC. Advancement in the field of disarmament and arms control can only be achieved if states listen to, learn from and include strong voices from civil society that advocate change.

Thank you!