Mr Chair,

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a key instrument to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction. Recently we commemorated the 15th anniversary of its entry into force. We celebrate the impressive achievements of the convention.

At the same time, we recognize that more efforts are needed to ensure that it meets its full potential. Destruction is far from completed and will remain the core objective of this organization for years to come. We strongly encourage possessor states to do their utmost to meet their destruction targets as soon as possible.

Even if the Chemical Weapons Convention has already created a very strong norm against chemical weapons, we must continue our efforts towards CWC universality. It is only through universal adherence to the Convention that we will reach a world fully free of these inhumane weapons.

(Check against delivery)
Syria’s admittance that it possesses a stockpile of chemical weapons has rightly caused great concern and shows that the threat of chemical weapons is still very real. Norway urges Syria to act responsibly, not to use these abhorrent weapons under any circumstances, and to keep them secure. International law, binding also for Syria, strictly prohibits the use of chemical weapons.

We have encouraged the Director General of the OPCW to be ready and prepared to cooperate with any request from the United Nations Secretary General, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention and the Relationship Agreement between the UN and the OPCW. Norway welcomes the conclusion of the Supplementary Arrangement with the UN.

Mr Chair,

The Third Review Conference next year provides an excellent opportunity to further strengthen the CWC. Verification plays a crucial role in providing confidence that all states parties are living up to their obligations under the Convention. In this area the CWC is in the forefront compared with other arms control instruments. As more non-states parties join the Convention, there will be an increased need for verification. It is essential that we make sure the OPCW maintains the necessary capacity for current and future tasks and remains the world’s knowledge repository in the field of chemical weapons.

The use of Chemical weapons has severe humanitarian implications. The international community must be able to respond swiftly if the worst were to happen. In doing so we must take into account capacities already in place not least those of existing relief agencies. Norway has financially supported OPCW activities in this area over the years and will continue to do so.

We are also convinced that the CWC could benefit from increased inclusion of relevant stakeholders and civil society organizations in its work in order to ensure ownership and engagement. Evidently, we could learn from the working methods of the Biological Weapons Convention.

Mr Chair,

Norway welcomes the positive and forward-looking outcome of the Seventh Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention last December. Our new programme of work, where we cover three standing agenda items and a fourth biennial topic, should allow us to explore ways to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention, as well as addressing existing and emerging challenges in the coming years.
During the first Meeting of Experts of the intersessional process, we had a good exchange of views and benefitted from the variety of speakers. This makes us look forward to discuss the policy aspects at the coming Meeting of States Parties in December.

As with the CWC, we must continue to work towards universality in the BWTC, although the Convention has created a very strong norm against these weapons.

Increased universality, transparency and functionality of the Confidence Building Measures remain a Norwegian priority. We are pleased that the Review Conference managed to improve the CBM forms, reducing the reporting burden and hopefully increasing participation. Still, more efforts are needed both to improve the functionality of the CBM forms and to encourage more States Parties to submit them.

A common challenge for both the CWC and the BWTC is the need for strengthening national implementation of the conventions. Norway is concerned about the relatively high number of States Parties that have not yet put in place and enforced the necessary legislative and administrative measures and urges all States to do so.

We recognize that some member states need international assistance to ensure full implementation of the conventions. This issue is closely related to national capacity building and skills development in areas related to peaceful use. Against this background, Norway has made a number of voluntary contributions to assistance programmes and projects, particularly in Africa and South-East Asia.

Mr Chair,

Norway will continue to be a staunch supporter of the CWC as well as the BTWC, which we consider to be invaluable instruments in our common efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

One main reason for the success story of the CWC is that the Convention has been bolstered by the OPCW. We must ensure that this organization and its Technical Secretariat are given the political and financial support they need to fulfill their mandate. Likewise, we would also highlight the importance of maintaining a strong Implementation Support Unit for the BTWC as this unit has proved so valuable for the health of the convention.

Lastly, a few words on the prevention of arms race in outer space. This is an urgent issue. There is a window of opportunity to deal with this agenda in a preventive manner. Unless we deal with
it soon, we will gradually be confronted by an increasing number of countries claiming national security interest as an excuse for inaction.

Norway is therefore ready to move forward on deliberations on how to prevent an arms race in outer space and support the annual resolution in the UN General Assembly on this topic.

At the same time, we should not delay in enhancing transparency measures on civilian outer space activities. We are grateful for the work carried out by the EU on a draft code of conduct for outer space activities.

Lastly, Norway joins others in calling for the full universality of the Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.