Mr Chair,

Let me start by echoing other speakers in welcoming you as the chair for our deliberations at this year's session of the First Committee. It is evident that this session will be coloured by the alarm over the recent use of chemical weapons. At the same time there is increased awareness of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and a strong call for the full implementation of NPT commitments. We applaud the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty.

The adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by the UN General Assembly on 2 April this year was historic. After many years of hard work and two failed attempts, the international community finally succeeded in adopting a legally binding instrument on reducing illicit and irresponsible international trade in arms. Norway attaches great importance to the humanitarian dimension of the treaty. For it regulates more than just trade – it is also a humanitarian instrument, and must therefore be implemented as such. Nothing is perfect, and neither is the Arms Trade Treaty, but it has the potential to reduce human suffering and armed violence in general. The Arms Trade Treaty should, when it enters into force, be a dynamic and living instrument, open for improvements and changes in the future. We see it as an important addition to the humanitarian disarmament efforts, and in this context we should learn from the valuable experience gained from the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions in its future implementation.

The most important task ahead of us is to ensure a thorough and effective implementation of the ATT. We must ensure that it fulfils its humanitarian potential. Let us all apply the treaty’s provisions to the broadest range of conventional arms.

(Check against delivery)
Let us all apply the provisions on prohibitions and on export and export assessment in the true spirit of international humanitarian law and respect for human rights. Let us all practice transparency to the greatest extent possible.

The immediate task ahead of us is to work for the treaty’s rapid entry into force. We have reasons for optimism: 113 states have signed and 6 have already ratified. Norway signed on 3 June and we are preparing for prompt ratification. We want the ATT to be universal. We therefore welcome new signatory states during this session of the General Assembly and after, and we urge states to speed up their ratification processes.

Let me finally pay tribute to civil society and the contribution they have made during the whole ATT process, including the negotiations. Without their efforts and commitment I do not believe we would have achieved the result we did in April this year. And I encourage civil society to continue to contribute during the important implementation phase.

Mr Chair,

Since last year, the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has been firmly on our agenda, fully in line with the outcome of the NPT 2010 Review Conference. The participant countries have clearly expressed their “deep concern at the catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons”.

In March this year, Norway hosted an international conference in Oslo on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. A total of 128 states attended the conference, together with relevant UN humanitarian organisations, the ICRC, and representatives of civil society.

The main conclusion from the conference was that no state or international body would be able to address the humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation in any adequate or meaningful way. The conference established, in factual terms, what “catastrophic humanitarian consequences” means and implies.

We warmly welcome Mexico’s offer to host a follow-up conference next February. This will address the long-term consequences of a nuclear detonation, and the necessary preparedness for addressing such a catastrophe. This is of great relevance for all UN member states, both nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states. We therefore encourage all countries to participate constructively in this important discussion.

Mr Chair,

Norway attaches great importance to the full implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the last NPT Review Conference, which covers the three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses.

Norway remains a staunch supporter of bilateral disarmament measures such as the New START. We welcome president Obama’s Berlin address in June where he highlighted the need for further disarmament steps.
We also greatly appreciate the forward-looking cooperation with the UK on verification of nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, we welcome the Canadian proposal to set up a Group of Governmental Experts on a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

Multilateralism in nuclear disarmament remains, however, plagued by its long-lasting impasse. There can be no doubt that our overall objective is to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. We may disagree on the way to reach this common goal. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we should continue our efforts to further reduce the role of this category of weapons in security policies and doctrines. We should consolidate existing – and support new – nuclear weapons free zones, in particular in the Middle East. Thus, it is of great importance that the conference on a zone free of MWD in the Middle East will be held before 2015. It is also vital that the process of reducing the existing arsenals of nuclear weapons continues and hopefully accelerates.

At the same time, it is evident that a world free of nuclear weapons requires a credible non-proliferation regime. Norway maintains its call for the full universalisation of IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards and the Additional Protocol. We support efforts to develop proliferation resistant nuclear fuel cycles. We support the programme of action from the Nuclear Security Summit to secure all sensitive nuclear materials. Even more importantly, we need to resolve all outstanding proliferation concerns. We urge Iran to resolve the outstanding issues related to its past and current nuclear programme, so it fully lives up its NPT obligations. Furthermore, Norway strongly condemns the nuclear and missile tests carried out by the DPRK.

Mr Chair,

Any use of chemical weapons is utterly unacceptable, and those responsible must be brought to justice, and the case referred to the ICC. Norway welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 2118. The use of chemical weapons would constitute an imminent threat to international peace and security. It is encouraging that Syria today has become a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and Norway urges the Syrian Government to fully comply with its provisions. Norway is currently exploring ways to contribute to the objective of ensuring that Syrian chemical weapons are destroyed in a safe and expedient manner.

We have recently witnessed the use of chemical weapons, and this illustrates the urgent need to further strengthen the norm against this category of weapons of mass destruction, as set out in the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Norway therefore welcomes the successful outcome of the CWC Review Conference last April and emphasises the importance of implementing the decisions made at that Conference. We underline the need for full universalisation of the CWC, as well as the BWC, and urge all the remaining states that are not party to these conventions to join them. Allow me also to join other speakers in congratulating the OPCW with the Nobel Peace Prize.

To conclude, it is the expectation of my delegation that the First Committee reaffirms the norms against chemical and biological weapons, provides guidance on how to bring nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation forward, and reiterates our strong support for the ATT.

Thank you.