Mr. Chair,

My delegation extends congratulations and full cooperation to you as you lead this Committee in its pursuit of world peace.

Pope Francis’s recent address to the United Nations can provide a leitmotif to our work, as he set out principles for the world to achieve lasting peace and universal fraternity in our common home. This fraternity must rest on the sacredness of every human life.

He appealed to everyone to “work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and between peoples.” For war is both a “negation of all rights and a dramatic assault on the environment.” Thus, negotiation, mediation and arbitration, as proposed by the UN Charter, must be diligently pursued as the only way to develop international norms for the protection of all peoples.

The work of this Committee covers a wide range of arms issues: small arms and light weapons, landmines, chemical and biological weapons, cluster munitions, armed drones, nuclear weapons, the arms trade, and keeping weapons out of outer space. In all of these fields, there are mixed results, but it cannot be said that the world is even approaching a state of disarmament. The resources spent on militarization and weapons development continue to rise, while the funding for all the United Nations programs for peace and development pales in comparison.

Civilian deaths from the use of explosive weapons continue to rise. Arms such as cluster munitions and chemical weapons, though prohibited, still find their way into conflicts. The conflicts scarring landscapes and moving peoples from homes to perilous deserts and seas – indeed, to cemeteries - testify to the lack of political will to stamp out the gun culture that still stands as an obstacle to the peaceful development of peoples. There will never be sustainable development without peace. Governments must resolve to take sincere action to reduce the manufacture, sale and use of weaponry of all descriptions and reduce their dependency on arms for power.

As the twenty-first century unfolds, it is becoming ever clearer that war does not and cannot resolve conflict. Preventive means, mediation, peacekeeping, and peace building are the most useful tools in our hands. We must employ them much more fully than we presently do.

The parlous state of nuclear weapons negotiations is a prime concern to this Committee. The failure of the NPT Ninth Review Conference to agree on a Final Document is dissipating
political will to negotiate towards fulfilling the promise of the NPT. At the same time, the modernization of nuclear weapons continues. Pope Francis, in his Address to the General Assembly, expressed the anxiety of so many in the world, stressing the "urgent need to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons."

The Pope thus reinforced the message he sent to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons last December, in which he said: "Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence."

Mr. Chair,

Nuclear deterrence is an obstacle to real and lasting peace. Indeed, true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of a matching supply of equally destructive armaments but only in mutual trust. We must therefore build trust among nations. That is only possible when all nations submit themselves to the same rules. *Pacta sunt servanda.* The NPT is not just a set of legal obligations; it is also a moral commitment based on trust among Parties. Yet the NPT's central promise of nuclear disarmament in exchange for nuclear non-proliferation remains a distant dream. If commitments to nuclear disarmament are not complied with, constituting breaches of trust, then nuclear weapons proliferation would be a logical corollary, threatening not only the credibility but ultimately the existence of the NPT.

The efforts now under way to build public understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons deserve our full support. A UN open-ended working group to identify and elaborate effective measures for the full implementation of Article VI of the NPT, including legal provisions to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, would be a good first step. The rule of consensus should not be applied to block such efforts. While no stone should be left unturned to make this an inclusive process, the recalcitrance of some must not delay the will of the international community to move forward on this paramount issue of peace and security.

Pope Francis has called for a worldwide dialogue, including both the nuclear and non-nuclear states and the burgeoning organizations that make up civil society, to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all to the benefit of us all. If we give negotiations, political goodwill and full verification a chance to work, the world will not be doomed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. As Pope Francis noted: "The recent agreement reached on the nuclear question in a sensitive region of Asia and the Middle East is proof of the potential of political good will and of law, exercised with sincerity, patience and constancy."

Let us listen to the overwhelming call of the international community for urgent progress towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, because the only guarantee that nuclear weapons are never used is their complete elimination.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.