Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Switzerland and my own country Sweden (the De-alerting Group) on the issue of de-alerting, or decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems.

The De-alerting Group have since 2007 called on states that maintain nuclear weapons on high alert to take practical steps to decrease their operational readiness. We have persistently made these calls in the UNGA as well as in the review process of the NPT.

De-alerting is not an alternative to nuclear disarmament or a step that makes the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons more acceptable. Rather, de-alerting constitutes an interim disarmament measure that must be pursued alongside efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The contribution that lowering the operational status of nuclear weapons can make to nuclear disarmament has been widely recognized. De-alerting is a yet unfulfilled NPT disarmament commitment. It was a part of the 13 practical steps agreed at the review conference in 2000. It was confirmed in the 2010 Action Plan.

De-alerting is a key element of risk reduction and can contribute to diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military and security concepts, doctrines and policies.

Despite the recognition of the importance of de-alerting as a risk reduction measure, there are still hundreds of nuclear missiles estimated to be carrying some 1,800 warheads ready to be launched within a matter of minutes. This increases the risk of an inadvertent, unauthorised, erroneous or precipitated launch of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

We know that de-alerting is possible. We note that some states have lowered the level of operational readiness of non-strategic nuclear weapons and that some other nuclear weapon possessing states do not keep their nuclear weapons on high alert.

A wide range of practical measures to move forward on de-alerting have been put forward by experts. A notable contribution is the report of the Global Zero Commission on Nuclear Risk Reduction.

Our group put forward recommendations in a Working Paper to the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We also submitted a Working Paper on this issue to this year’s Open Ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament,
where de-alerting was discussed and gained considerable support among the participating states.

De-alerting should remain high on the disarmament agenda, not least in view of the upcoming review cycle of the NPT, as progress is needed on yet unfulfilled disarmament commitments. References to operational readiness of nuclear weapons were made in reports of nuclear-weapon states during the last review cycle of the NPT. We urge them to continue with this practice during the upcoming cycle, building upon information provided so far.

Mr Chairman,

It is against this background that the De-alerting Group will table the resolution entitled Decreasing the Operational Readiness of Nuclear Weapons.

This year's resolution is very similar to that adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session in 2014, the last time a resolution on this subject was presented in the First Committee. It only contains some technical updates.

The main objective of the resolution remains unchanged. It calls for further practical steps to be taken to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert status.

The growing support for de-alerting underlines the expectation that progress be made on practical disarmament steps. Advancing on such an issue would have positive security implications and underline the readiness to deliver on commitments made.

We look forward to continued strong support for the resolution.

Thank you.