Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to present the report of the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, which has been issued as document A/71/371.

I wish to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to all States, international organizations, academic institutions and members of civil society that participated in the OEWG. I believe the discussions were frank and interactive. They were also deeply enriched by the experts who participated in the panels.

As Chair, I made every effort to conduct the work of the OEWG in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, consulting with all stakeholders, including those delegations that did not participate in the meetings of the Working Group. In this way, I endeavoured to keep all States and relevant international and non-governmental organizations informed of the proceedings of the Working Group.

The report of the OEWG attempts to reflect in a fair and balanced way the wide range of views and proposals expressed. It identifies important areas of convergences, while summarizing in a factual and proportionate manner all the important ideas raised during the substantive sessions.

Part IV of the report of the OEWG addresses the substantive discussions and is structured along the lines of the mandate provided by the General Assembly in resolution 70/33.

Section A is devoted to the general exchange of views. It is noted that deliberations were underpinned by deep concern about the threat to humanity posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any nuclear weapon detonation. The risk of these catastrophic humanitarian consequences would remain as long as nuclear weapons exist.
The increased awareness of and well-documented presentations on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons compelled urgent and necessary action by all States, leading to a world without nuclear weapons. The Working Group also reaffirmed the need for all States to comply at all times with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.

This Section also reflects the various positions regarding: the current status of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime; the notion of a legal gap in the current international framework for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons; and the relevance of the international security environment and current geopolitical situation.

Section B deals with the issues contained in operative paragraph 2 of resolution 70/33 and addresses concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.

It describes the main approaches that were considered toward this end, including, inter alia, the pursuit of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination; a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention, which would set out general obligations, prohibitions and practical arrangements for time-bound, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament; a framework agreement, which would comprise either a set of mutually reinforcing instruments dealing progressively with various aspects of the nuclear disarmament process; a hybrid approach; and a “progressive approach”, focusing on the importance of the existing global regime, in particular the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and consisting of parallel and simultaneous effective legal and non-legal measures.

It was noted by some that the various approaches were partially overlapping, not necessarily mutually exclusive and could make different contributions to nuclear disarmament.

Importantly, the Working Group affirmed that the development of any effective legal measures for nuclear disarmament can only be aimed at strengthening the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and at implementing article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and that such measures should complement and strengthen the Treaty.
Section C addresses other measures that could contribute to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including but not limited to:

a) transparency measures related to the risks associated with existing nuclear weapons, such as the provision of standardized information at regular intervals on the number, type and status of nuclear warheads in their possession or within their territories, and measures taken to reduce risks, de-alert or reduce the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems;

b) measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorised or intentional nuclear weapon detonations, such as practical measures to reduce the number of deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons, to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and to ensure the protection of nuclear weapons command and control systems from cyber threats; and

c) additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the complexity of and interrelationship between the wide range of humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear detonation, such as the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation education, the inclusion of information on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as on the consequences of nuclear testing, including in the South Pacific and elsewhere, in history textbooks, the promotion of efforts to raise awareness at the grassroots level about the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons across national borders and generations and including on interconnected issues such as sustainable development, the environment, climate change, the protection of cultural heritage, human rights, humanitarian action, children's rights, public health and gender, and ensuring greater emphasis on the unique impact of nuclear weapons on the health of women and girls.

Other suggestions were also made, including for: the immediate return to substantive work in the CD through the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work; facilitating further major reductions in nuclear arsenals, including efforts to reduce levels of hostility and tension between States – particularly between those possessing nuclear weapons; strengthening nuclear-weapons-free zones and establishing new ones, including, as a priority, in the Middle East including through the implementation of the 1995 NPT Resolution on the Middle East; and ceasing all efforts to upgrade and modernize existing nuclear weapons in ways that result in new military capabilities or enable new military missions.
The examples I have given are only indicative of the various suggestions made by different States relating to the issues contained in operative paragraph 3 of resolution 70/33 which are listed in this Section.

Part V includes the conclusions and agreed recommendations of the OEWG.

The Working Group recommended that additional efforts can and should be pursued to elaborate concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. It reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the commitments made therein and further considered that the pursuit of any such measures, provisions and norms should complement and strengthen the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including the three pillars of the Treaty.

The Working Group recommended, with widespread support, the convening, by the General Assembly, of a conference in 2017, open to all States, with the participation and contribution of international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. The Working Group recognized that other States did not agree with the above recommendation and that they had recommended that any process to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations must address national, international and collective security concerns and supported the pursuit of practical steps, consisting of parallel and simultaneous effective legal and non-legal measures to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. The Working Group further recognized the views expressed with regard to other approaches.

The Working Group also recommended that States should consider implementing, as appropriate, the various measures suggested in the present report that could contribute to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including but limited to those suggested in the context of operative paragraph 3 of resolution 70/33.

Mr. Chair,

The work of the OEWG has not taken place within a vacuum. Rather, it has come nearly 40 years since the General Assembly, meeting in its first special session devoted to disarmament, agreed to a programme of action that listed nuclear disarmament as the highest priority. It has now been twenty years since the United Nations disarmament machinery last conducted multilateral negotiations on a legally-binding instrument relating to nuclear disarmament.
Against this backdrop, it is my sincere hope that the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group, as reflected in its report, will help take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, leading to our shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Thank you.