Mr. Chair,

The growing polarization of views on nuclear disarmament is one of the greatest challenges facing this Committee. We and many others are frustrated by the pace of nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, this frustration has spawned diverging approaches which threaten to overshadow our accomplishments, rather than renew our common commitment to the universal goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. It also risks undermining the foundation of trust and compromise essential for further action.

The Open-ended Working Group in Geneva this year provided an opportunity to refocus discussion on nuclear disarmament. It is regrettable that states possessing nuclear weapons did not join the Group. Given our commitment to ridding the world of nuclear weapons, Canada sought to participate constructively, and was disappointed when the Group was unable to reach consensus on its final report. We are concerned that its principal recommendation may widen divisions among states, rather than uniting us in common cause.

Canada believes that the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty provides the basis for advancing disarmament and we are concerned that proposed new measures might undermine its primacy. We support negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Ban but only as the ultimate step to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world. If our goal is to achieve effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament, we remain unconvinced that, without the participation of states that possess nuclear weapons, a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons at this time will offer anything more than the illusion of progress. Ultimately, a world free of nuclear weapons will be achieved through progressive and realistic steps. There are no quick fixes.

Mr. Chair,

Canada has long been a determined advocate of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, and this year, alongside Germany and the Netherlands, we have introduced a resolution that tangibly moves this project forward by establishing a High-level FMCT Preparatory Group. Its mandate would be to build on the work of the recent Group of Governmental Experts, engage in open-ended Informal Consultations with the broader UN membership, and ultimately make recommendations on substantial elements of a future Treaty. We believe we have developed a credible, realistic and inclusive proposal that will set the stage for future negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. We are convinced that many here also believe that we can and should move beyond the status quo. We encourage you to support our resolution and demonstrate our firm collective resolve to get this treaty done.

Canada is pleased with the progress made on disarmament verification this year, notably by the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, and we welcome Norway’s new resolution on this subject. Canada also continues to strongly encourage all NPT States Parties, particularly the Nuclear Weapon States, to increase transparency in fulfilling their NPT commitments. Canada will work within the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative to advance these commitments as we approach the 2020 NPT review cycle next year. The recent 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the CTBT, and new UN Security Council Resolution 2310 promoting its universalization, provide an impetus for renewed efforts to bring it into force. In this regard, we welcome Myanmar and Swaziland’s recent ratifications.
Mr. Chair,

While Canada welcomes the reinvigoration of disarmament discussions, we continue to face pressing non-proliferation challenges. Regional and international peace and security are increasingly jeopardized by North Korea’s accelerated pace of nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, in flagrant violation of its own commitments, multiple UN Security Council resolutions and the will of the international community. We condemn these provocative acts in the strongest possible terms.

We call on all states to fully and effectively implement UN sanctions to convince North Korea to return to the negotiating table. We strongly believe that it is in the interest of both the international community and North Korea to seek a peaceful, negotiated political solution.

It was through such dialogue and negotiations that the P5+1 were able to reach agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action last year. We believe the JCPOA is able to effectively constrain Iran’s nuclear program, as long as it is fully implemented and internationally verified. Canada strongly supports the IAEA’s crucial role in verifying Iran’s implementation, and we call on all Member States to consider making extra-budgetary contributions to ensure the IAEA has the resources to fulfil its verification mandate.

In closing, Mr. Chair, developing flexibility and compromise based on trust and confidence-building efforts will be increasingly important to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament measures. It is incumbent upon us now to work more closely together to overcome the remaining challenges and achieve the greater peace and security that we all desire and that the world deserves.

Thank you.