Mr. Chair,

Our work in the First Committee is a vital component of the United Nations' grand ambition — of stopping war and keeping the peace, upholding rights and protecting human dignity, promoting justice and social progress, achieving better standards of living, and eliminating the most sweeping threat to this grand ambition — the threat to humanity, whose living standards we seek to improve, posed by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, which can extinguish large swathes of humanity, or all of it.

We can only do this all together and not apart. We must preserve and strengthen multilateralism as the most effective means to achieve our objectives. Multilateralism, simply put, means combining our strength, progressing in step, and achieving together.

The stupor that has plagued multilateralism in disarmament for decades and has prevented us from achieving any meaningful progress is finally showing signs of lifting. The adoption by 122 countries of the nuclear weapons ban treaty is the cure for this nuclear narcolepsy.

Last April, the UN Disarmament Commission adopted recommendations for “practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.” This was followed in June by the adoption of recommendations for the “objectives and agenda of the Fourth Special Session on Disarmament.” As a capstone, last July the UN saw the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons — after a mere 5 weeks of negotiations marked by cooperation, mutual respect and the deep collective desire to achieve a breakthrough in nuclear disarmament and not just more talk about it.
Mr. Chair,

A key principle that should underpin our engagement in this work is the need to comply with our obligations under the various treaties and agreements on non-proliferation and disarmament of conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction. And to universalize them. This is the highest priority. Just more talk and more conferences is never progress but just more of the same. Discussions should do more than they undo; further discussion should do more than was done before. The oft-expressed unquenchable desire for disarmament has become an end in itself.

Let us stop politicizing these discussions lest we paralyze the process and dampen our chances of real rather than rhetorical progress. Human survival is not a political issue. Avoiding war with nuclear weapons is not debatable, though the capability for it and the availability of them may increase so much as to make nuclear war compelling.

Universalization requires that these instruments of peace and safety — these documented attempts to beat swords into plowshares — are appreciated and promoted in regional and domestic settings, fully within Member States’ different and unique contexts. In this area, the only size-that-fits-all is a dead post-nuclear planet that serves as humanity’s coffin.

On this note, the NPT comes to mind. It is called the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, but its end goal is the same — global nuclear disarmament. Non-proliferation is just the first step to it.

Global disarmament will remain an elusive goal while the number of nuclear states keeps growing.

It is critical to total disarmament to stop the spread of nuclear weapons — to new not to say unstable states; not least because they can spread from there to non-state parties of the kind we dread.

The 2020 Review Conference must deliver a substantive outcome or we run the risk of pulling out the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, causing the architecture of endeavor toward a nuclear free world to collapse.

The tensions in the Korean Peninsula, generated and sustained by the reckless and roguish behavior of the DPRK, pose a clear and present danger— not just to peace, but the survival of societies and economies in that part of the world, and therefore the economic stability of the rest of the world. It is more than urgent; it is imperative that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty come into force the soonest.

As for the DPRK, we will continue to call for a resumption of dialogue as the first way to reduce tensions and ultimately resolve the problem.
As a manifestation of its unwavering commitment towards realizing the goal of complete, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament, the Philippines signed the nuclear weapons ban treaty on the first day it was opened for signature. The treaty complements and strengthens the existing nuclear disarmament architecture. By unambiguously de-legitimizing nuclear weapons, and challenging the concept of nuclear deterrence, it closes the legal gap that has outlawed chemical and biological but not nuclear weapons. It sets the stage for their eventual elimination.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the coming into force of the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone. I invite our distinguished representatives to support and co-sponsor the resolution on that treaty which ASEAN will table at this session.

Mr. Chair,

In today's world, new technologies are developed almost by the minute. It poses an immense challenge to the disarmament community when such technologies are weaponized. The UN must address these emerging challenges by developing new instruments and frameworks that encompass them and contain the threats they pose. We wish to cite in particular the important work of UNIDIR in disarmament education, especially on emerging security issues relating to autonomous weapons systems and cybersecurity. We urge Member States to support its work in this regard.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.