Thank you Mr Chairman,

1 At the outset, allow me to congratulate you and the members of your bureau on your appointments. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Under Secretary General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms Izumi Nakamitsu on her appointment and her dedication towards advancing disarmament efforts.

2 Singapore aligns itself with the statement delivered by Thailand, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the statement delivered by Indonesia, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Mr Chairman,

3 In January 2017, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists shifted the minute hand of the Doomsday Clock to two and a half minutes to midnight, signifying its opinion that the world is at its closest to global catastrophe in two decades. Urgent, collective and decisive action is needed. The First Committee must be used as a platform to galvanise such action.
Mr Chairman,

4 The international security environment remains very challenging, and there have been a number of developments of concern. First, Singapore is gravely concerned over the escalation of tensions in the Korean Peninsula, in particular the recent missile launches and nuclear test by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Such provocative actions severely threaten the peace and stability of the region and the world. In September 2017, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers unanimously deplored the DPRK’s nuclear test, and strongly urged the DPRK to immediately halt actions that violate resolutions of the Security Council and return to the negotiating table. Singapore reiterates our support for the peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, as well as our longstanding call for the DPRK to abide by its international obligations and commitments, and urges the DPRK to return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

5 Second, we are concerned about the looming risks of a radiological attack by terrorists and non-state actors. Earlier this year, authorities in our region arrested eight people connected to the theft of Iridium-192, a radioactive material used to make dirty bombs. We cannot discount the possibility that terrorist groups could carry out a nuclear or radiological terror attack. National measures must be adopted, and international cooperation intensified, to counter such threats. On our part, Singapore passed the Terrorism (Suppression of Misuse of Radioactive Material) Bill in May 2017, paving the way for our ratification of the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts against Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) in August 2017.

6 Third, cyber-attacks remain a clear and present danger. Such attacks adversely impact essential services, trade and commerce, as well as the lives of ordinary people. Yet, work at the United Nations to build on global norms to ensure a secure, resilient and economically vibrant cyberspace has stalled. It is unfortunate that the latest iteration of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, ably chaired by Mr Karsten Geier from Germany, could not agree on a substantive report. This reflects the divergences in perspectives on how we can collectively preserve cyberspace as a peaceful, safe and secure domain.
More dialogue is required to bridge these differences. We need to step up efforts to forge consensus on a set of global norms on cyberspace and enhance regional and international cooperation on cybersecurity. Singapore is committed to doing our part. As a small and highly-networked State and a regional hub for telecommunications, banking, aviation and maritime, we stand for a rules-based cyberspace. We recently hosted the second iteration of the Singapore International Cyber Week in September 2017 to continue dialogue on this important issue. A key event included the 2nd ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity, which saw representation from all ASEAN Member States. During the meeting, the ASEAN Member States agreed on the importance of enhancing coordination to ensure ASEAN’s cybersecurity efforts are focused, effective and synergetic. My delegation will elaborate on this issue during the relevant Thematic Debate.

Mr Chairman,

7 Despite these challenges, there has been some positive momentum on disarmament in the past year. First, for the first time in close to twenty years, the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) reached consensus on a substantive set of recommendations on “Practical Confidence-building measures in the Field of Conventional Weapons”. Second, the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-IV), skilfully steered by Mr Fernando Luque from Ecuador, defied expectations to agree on the objectives and agenda of a future SSOD-IV in June 2017.

8 Third, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted in July 2017. We especially thank the core group as well as civil society, for spearheading this movement, which was catalysed by the collective desire to avoid the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. While we regret that our concerns on the Treaty were not fully taken on board, the adoption of the Treaty, as well as the subsequent signings and ratification, have demonstrated that the majority of the international community is united in the belief that nuclear weapons should be prohibited. As we look ahead to the TPNW’s eventual entry into force, it will be important for the international community to
find a realistic and complementary role for the Treaty within the existing global disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

9 At the same time, Singapore reiterates its resolute support of the NPT and its three pillars. The NPT remains the cornerstone of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Mutually-reinforcing progress on disarmament and non-proliferation is essential to strengthening international peace and security. The First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of States Parties to the NPT in May this year made little substantive headway. We hope that States Parties can achieve more concrete and actionable outcomes at the Second Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva next year, as part of our collective effort to uphold the legitimacy and relevance of the NPT.

10 Singapore remains fully committed to the ultimate goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. We have a responsibility to our future generations, and will continue to support efforts to make concrete and meaningful progress. As eloquently put by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, “there are multiple pathways to a nuclear weapon-free world”. Naturally, meaningful progress in nuclear disarmament will only be possible when all relevant parties, particularly those possessing nuclear weapons, join in this global effort. We echo the Secretary-General’s call for inclusive dialogue, renewed international cooperation and above all, practical measures for irreversible, verifiable and universal nuclear disarmament.

Conclusion

Mr Chairman,

11 Three swallows do not make a summer. While these developments are undoubtedly significant, they are not ends in themselves. More work is needed to find common ground and bridge divergences of opinion, in order to reach our ultimate objectives. Potential avenues to build on the positive momentum include the: (a) High Level International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament in 2018; (b)
SSOD-IV which has yet to be scheduled; and (c) continued discussions at the United Nations on cybersecurity.

12 In conclusion, unlike the regular passage of time, we have the opportunity to wind back the Doomsday Clock. We must strive to do so, especially during this session of the First Committee. On our part, Singapore will continue to work constructively with all parties towards a successful outcome of the First Committee.

13 I thank you, Mr Chairman.