UNGA 73 (Nuclear weapons cluster)

Statement on the Progressive Approach

Mr/Madam Chairperson

I take the floor on behalf of Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey

1. This year's First Committee is an opportunity to reflect on the significance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which opened for signature fifty years ago on 1 July 1968.

2. In less than two years, NPT States Parties will meet in New York for the 2020 Review Conference – fifty years after its entry-into-force.

3. The NPT is a success story. It is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, contributing to peace and security— with its safeguards and verification arrangements.

4. The 50th anniversary of the NPT obliges us to be forward-looking and focus on common interests in supporting and strengthening the Treaty. We need to narrow differences and find space for compromise to advance toward our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The negotiators of the NPT knew that the threat of the spread of nuclear weapons and possibly even nuclear conflict was too big to contain alone. They realised a multilateral approach was the only way.

5. That is still true today. We are firmly committed to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world and believe it is best pursued through a progressive approach consisting of pragmatic, inclusive and effective steps. Such steps include but are not limited to the universalization and prompt entry into force of the CTBT, negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament of a Treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, cooperative
international efforts on nuclear disarmament verification, greater transparency, and more dialogue with the engagement of the Nuclear Weapons States.

6. A progressive approach takes into account the international security environment, without losing sight of the concerns about the risks posed by nuclear weapons. Indeed, the NPT has always been an instrument for pursuing ambitious aims whilst taking into account geopolitical realities.

7. We are concerned by challenges to long-standing norms and to the rules based international order. We appreciate there are differences of opinion across a range of multilateral forums about how best to advance nuclear disarmament. While we acknowledge the concerns about the perceived lack of progress on nuclear disarmament and about the deteriorating international security environment, these dynamics should not inhibit our efforts to collaborate on areas where common ground exists, to reinforce the NPT. We all bear the responsibility for making progress on disarmament; we therefore must overcome our differences and find common ground.

8. Status quo is not an option, but it is difficult to conceive of concrete progress on nuclear disarmament without the direct involvement of those possessing nuclear weapons. We need their leadership, for nuclear weapons states to assume the particular responsibilities they have undertaken in the NPT, and to move forward on meeting their article VI obligations. Building trust and confidence will play an important role in this regard. This is only possible through the constructive and sustained engagement, across regions, of all stakeholders.

9. We urge countries to use the time we have at this First Committee to direct efforts toward identifying and building upon areas of common ground in the interests of a successful NPT review conference in 2020.