Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, our Delegation fully associates itself with the statement by South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition.

Over the past year, we have witnessed with apprehension an intensification of brinksmanship and volatile behavior from nuclear-weapon states, and we have followed with grave concern the prolonged standstill in their disarmament initiatives and dialogue. The nuclear weapon states have taken to what seems to be a softening of their adherence to disarmament commitments, including under Article VI of the non-proliferation treaty. Some are articulating that certain conditions are required for disarmament talks to even take place.

We hope that such tendencies are overturned. Brazil would stand ready to support resumed disarmament talks in multiple formats and frameworks, to the extent that they comply with our shared multilateral disarmament obligations.

We have also learned, with apprehension, of the disquieting nuclear weapon modernization programs that were recently announced or set in motion, including new types of arsenals for use in a broader number of theaters, with variable yields that may reduce the threshold in decisions to use these WMDs. There is a fundamentally flawed belief that the death, destruction and disease that would ensue can be somehow be controlled or contained. They cannot.

The sensation of security imparted by the possession of nuclear weapons is illusory. History demonstrates that the decisions made by several countries to dismantle their existing nuclear weapon stockpiles or to terminate their nuclear-weapon development programs have enhanced their own security and stability in their regions. In contrast, countries that continue to rely on nuclear weapons often find themselves locked in dangerous and unstable interactions with one another, marked by permanent tensions, mistrust, and the risk of miscalculations and catastrophic accidents.
The decision to disarm should not wait for optimal security preconditions that may never materialize. Nuclear disarmament must be an integral part of any effort to reduce tensions and to build lasting and stable peace, at all levels.

Mr. Chairman,

The devastating, indiscriminate and long-lasting consequences of nuclear weapons, which affect women and children foremost, make these weapons inherently incompatible with international law, particularly international humanitarian law. And yet, they were the only weapon of mass destruction not explicitly prohibited. At long last, this gap was filled with the adoption, in July 2017, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The TPNW is an integral part of international law and of the rules-based disarmament regime. It has come to stay as perhaps the most effective of measures towards the goal, shared by us all, of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The entire structure of the TPNW is designed to uphold and advance obligations enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in its three pillars. In particular, the TPNW is consistent with and complementary to Article VI of the NPT, which obliges all States Parties to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.

At a more technical level, the TPNW sets the highest legally-binding standard for nuclear non-proliferation verification. While the NPT obligation to adopt Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements applies only to its Non-Nuclear-Weapon States Parties, the TPNW obliges all its States Parties, without discrimination, to maintain, at a minimum, its existing IAEA safeguards obligations at the time of entry into force of the Treaty. This, of course, without prejudice to additional safeguards instruments they may adopt in the future, which they would also be under an obligation to maintain.

Following in the footsteps of other categories of weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological weapons, the goal of elimination begins with their prohibition. But the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, whether intentional or accidental, make their total elimination an even more urgent moral imperative.

Mr. Chairman,

We reaffirm the crucial role of the NPT in the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. It is incumbent on all Parties to engage constructively to reach a successful outcome for the current review cycle. A repetition of 2015 would further erode the relevance and credibility of a treaty we all deem to be the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

The present review cycle must be used to increase commitment to and the effectiveness of a concrete roadmap to nuclear disarmament, recalling that the best way to achieve permanent disarmament is through multilateral, irreversible, transparent and verifiable measures.

Brazil reiterates its frustration with the failure, so far, to convene a Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East as provided for by the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 NPT Review
Conference. This issue cannot be left in a limbo. Brazil believes that the successful convening of the Conference represents a fundamental part of the NPT acquis and of the current review cycle.

Mr. Chairman,

The entry into force of the CTBT is the only legally binding assurance against the recurrence of nuclear testing. The Treaty was negotiated and adopted not as a standalone instrument on non-proliferation, but as part of a wider framework leading to nuclear disarmament. We renew our call on all States, and in particular those listed in Annex II of the CTBT, to demonstrate their commitment to the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime by signing and ratifying the Treaty without further delay.

Mr. Chairman,

Brazil is pleased with the results of the high-level FMCT expert preparatory group. We hope that its consensus report will be fully utilized as a sound basis for further discussions at the Conference on Disarmament, with a view to commencing negotiations on this important step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

I thank you.