Mr. Chair,

On behalf of the State of Palestine, allow me first to congratulate you on your election and to extend also our congratulations to the members of the Bureau, and to assure you of our full cooperation.

The State of Palestine aligns itself with the statements made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Tunisia on behalf of the Arab Group.

Mr. Chair,

All weapons of mass destruction must be prohibited as their use is incompatible, in all times, and under all circumstances, with the rules of international law, notably international humanitarian law, including the cardinal principles of humanity and distinction. The greatest possible breach to these principles derives from the existence and potential use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, with their indiscriminate short-term and long-term effects. Since there is no situation in which the use of nuclear weapons can be compatible with international law and the UN charter then their very existence is unlawful.

Total elimination of nuclear weapons is a moral, legal, and survival imperative, to preserve us from the existential threat and catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences posed by such weapons.

The NPT is not only about non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also about nuclear disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It was supposed to be a starting point towards nuclear disarmament, not a fait accompli that would justify the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons came to advance the goal of nuclear disarmament in direct implementation of Article VI of the NPT, making the two instruments complementary to each other.

The State of Palestine; therefore, is determined to contribute to the international disarmament process which is critical in achieving regional and international peace and one of the main goals behind the establishment of the United Nations.
In this regard, the State of Palestine is proud to have participated in and actively contributed to the elaboration of the landmark and historic Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, which was adopted on 7 July 2017. It is also proud to have joined the relevant instruments prohibiting other weapons of mass destruction.

The State of Palestine has also signed this year the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) with the IAEA.

Mr. Chair,

Establishing a Middle East Zone free of Nuclear Weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is not only crucial for regional security but for international peace and security. Thus, it is a concern for the international community as a whole not only the States of the region. It is more urgent than ever and constitutes an important contribution to nuclear disarmament.

Twenty-four years after the adoption of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, and 9 years after the adoption of the 2010 Action Plan on the Middle East, determined action is long overdue and must take place ahead of the 2020 Review Conference, without prejudice to the mandate and relevance of the Review Conference. We highlight the responsibility of the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution in advancing its implementation.

We stress the importance of the United Nations Conference to be held next November under the chairmanship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546, and urge all parties to participate in good faith in this inclusive conference. This Conference is open to all States of the region, and its decisions are based on consensus. A decision of self-exclusion or boycott of the conference by one party can only be attributed to this country's longstanding delaying tactic regarding the establishment of such a zone, as the only party that has unlawfully acquired nuclear weapons and continues to refuse joining the NPT. Nobody can claim that holding such a Conference is coming too early, it is coming now before it is too late.

Mr. Chair,

The State of Palestine is deeply concerned by the ever-increasing production and international trade of weapons, including conventional weapons, many of which are used indiscriminately and disproportionately, at the expense of other pressing objectives, including eradication of poverty and development.
The State of Palestine has acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty and is looking forward to cooperate with all States Parties to ensure compliance with the treaty, including by ensuring the prohibition on transfer of conventional arms, ammunitions, munitions, as well as parts and components if they could be used in the commission of atrocity crimes, including crimes against humanity and war crimes, including attacks directed against civilian objects or civilian protected as such.

Mr. Chair,

Palestine also underlines our shared and collective responsibility to preserve and protect the spaces that belong to all humanity, including outer space. Ensuring that outer space is a safe and secure space dedicated to research and development and our collective human advancement is essential for promoting international cooperation and safeguarding international peace and security.

In closing, we reiterate our full support for the work of this Committee and urge all States to take principled and determined action to fulfill its ultimate purpose of achieving a more peaceful and stable world.

I thank you.