Dear Chair and Delegates,

We, the youth, are being held hostage in a precarious world in which escalations amongst leaders edge us closer to a nuclear war; and regional armed conflicts and crimes tear families apart. Our generation is facing a bleak future, if we remain on this current trajectory.

Something must be done now to save humanity, and we have an answer.

Progress and innovation can come from and be inspired by our generation — such as Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai, and Yara Shahidi — and listening to our voices is imperative to creating a world of peace.

Every generation brings with it new technologies, and the ease it brings into our lives is but a hundredth of the damage it could cause us. The same software that utilizes facial recognition to unlock our phones can easily be applied to autonomous selection and attack on targets, directly illustrating the ramifications of allowing the exploitation of progress.

Additionally, as mentioned by the Secretary-General, high levels of arms and ammunition in circulation contribute to insecurity, cause harm to civilians, facilitate human rights violations and impede humanitarian access.

Further, 20,384 civilians were recorded directly killed or injured by explosive weapons in populated areas in 2018.

Nuclear weapons also continue to be the greatest immediate threat facing humanity. Many youth still believe the myth that nuclear weapons helped end World War II. They are also not aware of
the environmental and humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons testing, especially on the health and lands of indigenous people around the world. How many are aware about the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on women and girls? Are they aware about the catastrophic effects of even one limited nuclear war amongst states?

Chair and Delegates,

Recognizing youth as a major demographic of victims of armed conflicts, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2250. The resolution called upon states to provide mechanisms for youth to participate meaningfully in peace processes.

Youth must be at the forefront of decisions that impact them, but they cannot do so until they have been properly educated on those impacts; this urgency of public awareness and education are underscored in the preamble of the TPNW.

It is possible to have youth involved in disarmament affairs and create substantial change. Action 38 of the Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda states that UNODA will fuse a partnership to further invest in disarmament education and the engagement of youth. With an in depth-curriculum, events, programs within universities, and opportunities to participate in the discussions, youth can become activists.

Once they become activists, major successes can be achieved. History has shown that youth-led movements have proven to be more inclusive, open-minded, and successful than other past campaigns. Good examples are the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Control Arms, and international signature petitions, such as the Hibakusha Appeal.

Chair and Delegates,

We believe new initiatives are necessary. Hence, we have developed a series of recommendations:

1. Include Youth and other underrepresented groups on your delegations;
2. Support UNODA’s Disarmament Champions program;
3. Support humanitarian-based educational initiatives;
4. Provide funding to educational institutions and efforts.
In conclusion, we remind everyone that the UN claims to value dialogue with passionate young activists. However, in practice, this value has not always been consistently implemented. Thus, it is time for us to work together.

It is time to save the world from annihilation.

Thank you for your time.