Mr. Chair, esteemed delegates,

In addition to the statements by the European Union and by The Netherlands on behalf of a group of countries, let me make the following statement on behalf of Finland.

A favourite quote of a former Finnish President and statesman, Mr Paasikivi, was: “The beginning of all wisdom is acknowledgement of facts”.

In today’s world, this approach poses some difficulty. Half-truths, blame games, competing narratives and endless rights of reply are distracting us from the evidence-based facts. Despite this trend, it will be helpful for our deliberations on the nuclear issues, to recall few key facts. They should encourage us to continue our collaborative efforts, and help us realise the ultimate wisdom: in nuclear weapons armament – and disarmament – the only sustainable way forward is cooperation and dialogue.

Let me offer you four facts for your consideration.

First - the total number of nuclear weapons today is significantly lower than during the days of the Cold War. However, this downward trend is under threat by increased reliance on nuclear weapons as well as treaty violations and non-compliance.

Second - The absolute majority of nuclear weapons, over 90%, belong to the Russian Federation and the United States. When it comes to nuclear weapons, there is only one real parity, and it is between these two states. With great power comes great responsibility, and nuclear disarmament is no exception to the rule. Russia and the United States need to continue to spearhead nuclear disarmament.

Third fact to consider is the rapid technological development. This has a huge impact on nuclear and conventional weapons development, it affects command and control structures and makes deterrence calculations more complex. Further, an additional domain, cyber, has emerged as a battlefield and may accelerate arms race.

Which brings me to the last, fourth fact – the economics. The hundreds of billions spent in the nuclear arms race are a missed opportunity from some other, perhaps more valuable endeavours, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

What is the wisdom we could draw from the four facts? Let me offer three thoughts, from Finland’s perspective.
First, our ultimate goal of nuclear free world can only be achieved through a process providing increased – or at least undiminished – security for all. This goal requires a good faith effort to build trust through increased dialogue and communication, while exercising restraint in rhetoric and postures. In particular, we see the need for a dialogue on how to achieve and enhance strategic stability amongst the Nuclear Weapons States. We are happy to have heard from the P5 that such an effort is ongoing, and encourage it to continue and to deepen. Given the global importance of the matter, Non-Nuclear Weapons States should also be involved in an appropriate manner.

Second – from the past, we know that in an increasingly tense security climate, escalation can happen very fast. Besides increasing overall dialogue, mechanisms to increase transparency and to manage crises are needed to reduce risk of nuclear weapon use. Finland is committed to support and facilitate work in this key field.

Third – a concrete show of leadership from the two major nuclear powers, the US and Russia, would be the extension of the New START. The sooner the extension, the faster the discussion on additional and new measures could begin. Such extension would also provide much needed impetus to the NPT Review Process.

Dear colleagues,

Achieving nuclear disarmament and achieving the nuclear zero require serious negotiations taking into account security concerns of all participating countries. Going forward and avoiding backtracking is more important than knowing the exact time of arrival. Finland will certainly join and support serious endeavours in nuclear disarmament with any means it can.