Chairperson,

South Africa associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition.

Chairperson,

History has demonstrated the immense, uncontrollable capability and indiscriminate nature of a nuclear weapons detonation, which reaches well beyond national borders, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake. More than seventy years after the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as thousands of nuclear tests, the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017 reflects the concerns of the international community with regard to nuclear weapons. It finally bans the only category of weapon of mass destruction not yet to be subject to a global prohibition, following the example of the existing conventions proscribing biological and chemical weapons and it does so with a pronounced humanitarian approach. On this basis we congratulate the countries that signed and ratified the Treaty on the Commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September 2019. We likewise encourage States that have not done so, to please sign and ratify the TPNW to ensure its early entry into force.
Chairperson,

Having concluded the third PrepCom of the 2020 NPT Review Cycle earlier this year, we attach great importance to the continued validity of the outcomes of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences, as well as the extensive Action Plan aimed at accelerating the implementation of all Treaty provisions under the three Treaty pillars. However, urgent action is required to fully implement the commitments and undertakings entered into at these Review Conferences. Between the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and now, we have continued to witness attempts to negate and reinterpret the nuclear disarmament undertakings made since then.

We remain concerned about weapon modernisation programmes that contradict Article VI of the NPT and raise concerns that a new low-yield nuclear warhead would lower the threshold of nuclear use, and increase the risk of misinterpretation and escalation. This, together with deterrence arguments, have continued to polarise the nuclear non-proliferation regime. More needs to be done particularly by nuclear weapon States in the area of nuclear disarmament. South Africa believes that concrete progress on these solemn undertakings is essential to the success of the 2020 RevCon. We reiterate that the goals of the NPT can never be achieved if it is seen only as a means to protect the security concerns of a few countries at the expense of humanity at large. This merely encourages proliferation, contradicts nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments, and ultimately undermines the Treaty.

Chairperson,

In the above regard, a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices should remain a priority for the international community. Such a Treaty should serve both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament objectives and would need to be both credible and feasible. A ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would reinforce the ideals of the NPT and complement the CTBT.

Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. We hope that further work is conducted in this field, either in the form of a GGE or group of scientific experts.

Finally Chairperson, nuclear weapons are inhumane weapons, and it is inconceivable that their use could ever, under any circumstances, be consistent with international law, particularly international humanitarian law. Nuclear disarmament is not only a legal obligation, but also a moral and ethical imperative. It is with this in mind that my delegation has the honour to again table for consideration a resolution entitled “Ethical Imperatives for a world without nuclear weapons” which we hope will again receive wide support. I thank you.