Chairperson,
We share the frustration and concerns of many Member States that action in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in 2019 did not meet expectations for an end to the protracted impasse. While South Africa remains committed to a functioning Conference on Disarmament mandated to negotiate multilateral disarmament instruments, it is regrettable that in the 23 years that South Africa has been a member of this body, it has not discharged its basic mandate: the exception, of course, being the negotiations on the CTBT.

The inability of the CD to deliver on its responsibility as the "single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum" of the international community ranks high against a backdrop of serious challenges that have affected international disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control efforts.

Chairperson,
We therefore urgently need to attend to the current state of the Conference on Disarmament. We can no longer engage in past repetitive activities that have not brought the Conference closer to an agreement on a Programme of Work, but rather distracted the CD from the imperative of reaching consensus on a Programme of Work and starting negotiations, all the while creating the illusion that substantive work is taking place. We have said many times before
that this continued impasse is not sustainable and will increasingly affect the relevance and stature of the CD.

Chairperson,

Equally concerning is that within the UN Disarmament Commission, which is the recognised deliberative body on disarmament matters, little progress has also been achieved for several years. The so-called “UN Disarmament Machinery” has therefore not managed to make substantive progress in the disarmament and non-proliferation field.

Chairperson,

Despite these challenges, my delegation is encouraged by the work of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). We would like to commend the institute for conducting high quality independent research and convening timely discussions on issues within the field of disarmament. The current geo-political environment requires such innovative perspectives and enhanced dialogues that can respond to our collective security concerns.

In this context, my delegation joins calls to ensure the equal engagement and meaningful participation of women across multiple disarmament fora. Prioritising a gender perspective into disarmament and international security discussions expands our knowledge and understanding of challenges, with a view to greater progress in disarmament.

Chairperson,

Common threats can only be effectively addressed through enhanced international co-operation and strong international institutions that can address collective security concerns. It is with this in mind that my delegation stands ready to actively contribute towards exploring options to unlock the potential of the disarmament machinery. We will remain actively and constructively engaged in all disarmament fora with a view to seeking solutions that would inevitably require compromise to strengthen the multilateral system and efforts towards the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons.

It remains our hope that our discussions and decisions during this session will steer away from acrimonious debates to those that will strengthen solidarity and trust among Member States and move toward more consensus based resolutions and common ground, despite us dealing with a number of sensitive and complex issues and our sometimes different viewpoints. I thank you, Chairperson.