Thank you Mr Chairman,

It is always a very strong and moving experience to hear the testimonies of the Hibakushas. My delegation is honored that Ms Setsuko Thurlow took the time to visit us here in the OEWG this week. We encourage all in this room who haven’t yet done so to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to visit the excellent museums and meet with the survivors and their families there. It is an unforgettable experience and I believe necessary when working with nuclear weapons issues.

Let me also thank Ira Helfand and Sara Sekkenes for their excellent and important presentations. We agree with Dr Helfand’s assertion that the risk of use of nuclear weapons is greater today than in the last 25 years, due to the security situation in Europe and in Asia. This makes nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and the achievement of a nuclear weapon-free world, more urgent than ever.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation can support all the elements you have listed in Annex IV of your synthesis paper. Disarmament and non-proliferation education as well as awareness-raising about the consequences on humans, animals and plants of nuclear weapons detonations need to be an integral part of our efforts as should the impact the existence of nuclear weapons has on political and strategic thinking. Much more needs to be done here, in particular in countries that possess nuclear weapons such as Russia, China, Pakistan and India where the knowledge among decision makers as well as the general public often is scant and the involvement of research institutions and civil society organizations weak if not non-existent and undesirable. We witness with concern how the space for civil society involvement is shrinking. In light of the research done and presented here today by Dr Helfand about the unspeakably horrendous consequences of a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan or between the Russian Federation and the United States, the importance of awareness-raising and disarmament education in these countries become even more important.

Besides visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is also important, as was mentioned just now, that decision makers in particular visit former nuclear test sites such as Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan or the Pacific islands. And as Sara Sekkenes also highlighted, to move the agenda forward in a coherent way, nuclear weapons issues need to be much better reflected or integrated into other areas of policy making such as social, economic and sustainable development, climate change and the environment, culture including the protection of cultural heritage, and issues related to gender equality and children’s rights.

Mr Chairman,

Let me take this opportunity to thank the NGO:s, the think tanks and the research and educational institutions for their tireless efforts in trying to raise awareness and move the nuclear disarmament
agenda forward. The many working papers that have been tabled in this OEWG by NGO:s are examples of the important work that civil society organizations carry out.

The Swedish government is proud to fund the work of civil society organizations and in particular Swedish NGO:s have been regularly supported for decades. A vibrant civil society that doesn’t necessarily agree with the government is an important feature of any democratic, accountable and sustainable society.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.