Mr. Chair,

At the outset, let me thank High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Kim Won-soo, for his presence this morning.

I would also like to thank Dr. Nick Ritchie for his thought-provoking presentation.

As stated earlier this week, Switzerland is of the view

- that nuclear weapons, like other weapons of mass destruction, ought to be prohibited since they represent a serious threat for international and human security;
- that there is more than one way – or pathway – in which nuclear disarmament can be achieved;
- that one or more additional legally binding instruments – in conjunction with parallel measures of a non-legal nature – will be required to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons;
- that the difficulties that the international community has been encountering on the path towards a world without nuclear weapons in the past decades justify the active search for additional pathways that could accelerate the disarmament process.

In today’s discussion, which focuses on those pathways for nuclear disarmament, we would like to add the following points:

Any pathway to nuclear disarmament will need to entail a mix of short term, interim and long term measures, many of which have long been identified and even agreed to by the international community, for instance in the framework of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). The pathway chosen should on the one hand implement the various steps and measures agreed over time, and on the other hand implement the obligation contained in article VI of the NPT to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures.

In our view, the pathway chosen should be underpinned by the humanitarian dimension. This dimension has given a new sense of urgency to redoubling disarmament efforts and to moving more resolutely towards the vision of global zero. This dimension has also consolidated the firm conviction that it is imperative to prevent catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons detonations. We must do our utmost to avoid that any other nuclear disaster.

Another important aspect, to which we have already referred to, is that the pathway should be as global and universal as possible: Nuclear disarmament is a global issue. It requires a global solution. We would favour the pathway which receives strongest possible support from States from all regions of the world, including from States whose security doctrines currently rely on nuclear deterrence.

No matter what legal instrument is negotiated next, any pathway would have to be accompanied by efforts of risk reduction and of diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons. To do so, we need to stay engaged with the possessor states and continue to convince them to deliver on their promises. To give an example: Even if negotiations result in a prohibition of nuclear weapons, risk reduction efforts such as de-alerting must remain a priority as long as NW are not completely eliminated.

The negotiation of such an instrument could also be facilitated and accelerated by exploring how current cooperative and collective security frameworks could be further developed in order to build confidence amongst States. The set-up of these security frameworks and the way they address security concerns in a world without nuclear weapons will also play an important role in achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons.
Any pathway to nuclear disarmament must also be accompanied by a firm action against proliferation. Whatever pathway chosen for disarmament, it would be put at risk if additional states acquired nuclear weapons. Here, again, I would like to underline the importance of the continued strong support for the NPT regime, and the continued insistence on the implementation of all NPT obligations.

Mr. Chair,

Discussions in the OEWG have indicated that we have a degree of convergence on a number of issues. At the same time however, we clearly have some divergence on other issues, including the pace at which to advance, and when some specific measures could, or should be negotiated. In this context, I would like to echo the comment made earlier today by some delegations, namely Sweden, who have referred to the possibility that some concrete legal pathways, such as a framework convention, could offer the flexibility and creativity that seems to be necessary given the significant gaps that still remain between delegations.

In our view, such a framework convention, under current circumstances, could be further explored. Such a pathway could be the most appropriate and at the end of the day the most effective one. It could enable us to solidify the elements of convergence that we have, to register and validate underlying and key common elements. It could also enable us to anchor some key practical measures in a broader legal context. Also, it could enable States that are able to move faster and further than others to do so, while ensuring that all efforts remain part of a common, overarching framework. It could offer the possibility to gradually negotiate additional protocols, and States could adhere to different protocols over time. As Sweden indicated, the CCW provides an interesting framework to look at as we move forward.

Mr. Chair,

Let me conclude by stressing once more that this OEWG is the first ever structured discussion in the UN system about these questions, which represents a unique opportunity to identify the best pathway forward.

Thank you very much.