Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the members of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) namely Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country, Brazil. First, we would like to reiterate our support to your efforts to lead this process in a constructive, transparent and forward-looking manner.

Nuclear disarmament has been a goal of the international community since the inception of nuclear weapons. In the past seventy years, the international community has sought to achieve this seminal goal through the establishment of the existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, at the heart of which are the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the regime’s cornerstone, and the Treaties That Establish Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zones.

As recognised by successive NPT Review Conferences, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing, but also mutually interdependent objectives. These parallel objectives are more than a quid-pro-quo between nuclear haves and have nots. Indeed, failure to record progress in one of them will ultimately threaten to unravel achievements in the other.

Whilst there has been progress in limiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, the NAC remains concerned by the limited progress on nuclear disarmament. Despite successive undertakings from the nuclear-weapon-States, we seem to have hit a glass ceiling in recent times. Indeed, notwithstanding the significant reductions that have been made since Cold War highs, bilateral reductions are no substitute for multilateral disarmament implemented in accordance with the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency.

The ongoing failure to achieve entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the unfulfilled actions agreed upon in the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review
Conferences, the stalemate plaguing both the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and the Conference on Disarmament (CD), all contribute to the frustration of the vast majority of states. The international community knows what has to be done, can see what actions are needed, but seems unable or unwilling to take them.

In particular, the NAC deeply regrets the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to reach agreement on an outcome document, and is gravely concerned about the impact of this development on the credibility of the NPT and the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. This failure has reinforced the urgent need for action by the international community. In recent times, the world has witnessed a worrying number of nuclear tests in spite of the established international norm against nuclear testing, as well as unambiguous threats to use nuclear force by nuclear armed States. Non-state actors are openly seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. We are also witnessing a new nuclear arms race marked by continued investment in modernization and enhancement of nuclear weapons arsenals.

Mr Chairman,

The NAC welcomes the renewed attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks associated with nuclear weapons that has been generated by the international community since 2010, and the growing awareness that these concerns should underpin the vital need for nuclear disarmament and the urgency of achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world. We therefore welcome the compelling evidence presented at the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons which detailed the catastrophic consequences that would result from a nuclear weapon detonation, whether caused by accident, miscalculation or design. This initiative, together with the crucial role that civil society plays, has managed to create a growing awareness of the threat that even a single nuclear weapon poses to humanity, let alone the estimated 15 850 weapons that still exist, many on high alert status and ready to deploy within minutes.

Given the scale of devastation that nuclear weapons are designed to inflict, the fact that their consequences cannot be constrained within national borders and the ever increasing risk associated with a nuclear weapon detonation, the continued reliance upon them in security doctrines and concepts is immoral, unethical and provides a motivation to proliferate. For the NAC, there can never be right hands for the wrong weapons.
Mr Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament is not only an international legal obligation, but also a moral and ethical imperative. In spite of the growing international consensus regarding the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons, they still remain at the heart of the security doctrines of nuclear-weapon States and those party to regional alliances with nuclear-weapon States. Far from strengthening international peace and security, this state of affairs serves to weaken it, aggravating international tensions and conflict, and jeopardising the collective well-being of all States and peoples. It further engenders a perception that nuclear-weapon States harbour aspirations for the indefinite possession of these weapons contrary to their legal obligations and commitments.

In a world where the basic human needs of billions are not being met, the growing spending on nuclear weapons is both unacceptable and unsustainable. The allocation of vast resources to retain and modernise nuclear weapons is at odds with international aspirations to development, as expressed by world leaders to the achievement of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

Confronted with the contradictions between discourse and practice on the part of the NWS, the NNWS have no alternative but to take the lead and set the nuclear disarmament agenda in motion again.

We are not looking for a simple repetition of steps that we have already agreed to in other disarmament fora. These are steps we continue to support and strive to implement –after all, we call for many of them every year in the NAC resolution at the UN General Assembly.

Mr Chairman,

Several options for taking forward the nuclear disarmament agenda in a decisive way have been considered in previous years in different fora, both traditional and new, such as the NPT Review Conferences, the United Nations First Committee and the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons. The New Agenda Coalition (NAC) has contributed extensively to this debate, including through its Working Papers on Article VI of the NPT presented to the Treaty's 2010-2015 Review Cycle. These Working Papers identified and elaborated on the approaches generally discussed for effective measures on nuclear
disarmament (comprehensive convention, ban treaty, framework agreement or hybrid arrangement). These vary in scope and juridical nature, but share a common element: a set of core prohibitions on nuclear weapons to unambiguously outlaw them.

Recognising that the elaboration and analysis of these prohibitions can be undertaken without prejudging the selection of a particular option and without the involvement of the Nuclear Weapon States, the NAC welcomes the fact that this OEWG is already engaged in substantive and meaningful discussion on the elements required for an additional legal instrument or instruments for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. We expect the OEWG to make concrete recommendations in this regard to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session.

Mr Chairman,

Given that more than four decades have passed since the entry into force of the NPT, the status quo on nuclear disarmament is no longer acceptable. There is an urgent need for the commencement of negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament. We are confident that this OEWG, equipped with a strong mandate and operating under the General Assembly standard rules of procedure, is playing an important role in this respect.

Thank you.