Mr Chairman,

This statement is fully aligned with that of the European Union. Allow me to add a few elements from a national point of view.

My country is keenly aware of the delicate balance that lies at the heart of the NPT. Cooperation on the peaceful use of the atom for the benefit of our societies is a core component of that balance.

A significant number of countries plan to introduce nuclear power in the coming decades, or expand existing programs. They understand nuclear power to be a viable instrument when shaping national policies for energy security or climate change mitigation.

Beyond power generation, the benefits of peaceful use of the atom are multiple, as my country can testify.

Belgium has a long tradition in the field of medical applications of ionizing radiation. The entire value chain required for nuclear medicine, that is from target irradiation to research and practice, is of the highest standard. My country is also one of the major producers of medical radioisotopes, which play a paramount role in cancer diagnosis and therapy and whose production we will continue, adding new applications and increasing safety.

Expanding the benefits of nuclear applications for human health is a key objective for us. We therefore support dedicated programmes of organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency. Last year we contributed EUR 280,000 in targeted support for education, training, clinical practice and public health. We also contributed to IAEA IMPACT
missions in 4 African countries, which allowed to map priorities and needs in the fight against cancer.

Complex challenges such as global health need to be tackled through a collective effort. Organizations like the IAEA, the WHO and UNODC, should explore and deepen partnerships on human health. In the field of food and agriculture, such partnerships already exist. The IAEA and the FAO have a set a remarkable precedent in joint planning and research, and pooling resources.

Regarding the wider field of nuclear applications, Belgium last year gave 200.000 euros in voluntary funding in support of the renovation of the IAEA Nuclear Laboratories in Seibersdorf.

Mr Chairman,

The wheels of technological progress keep on turning. For instance, alternative sterilization technologies using X rays or proton therapy are developing at great speed. Countries and organizations such as the IAEA do well to keep abreast of these new developments and to ensure a level playing field.

The Belgian nuclear research centre SCK•CEN continues to develop the innovative research infrastructure called MYRRHA with the main objective of providing the research community with a highly performing and versatile installation to carry out material and fuel testing. Particular attention will be given to the transmutation of long-lived radioactive waste. Our nuclear research centre also remains an active provider of training services to the IAEA, particularly in the field of safeguards. Last year, the SCK•CEN received the official designation of “International Centre based on Research Reactors” (ICERR). In this framework, it will put its research and other facilities at the disposal of researchers of IAEA member states for education, training and joint R&D projects.

Mr Chairman,

A successful and responsible use of the atom is based on three crucial underpinnings: safety, security and safeguards. Strict adherence to international agreements, norms and guidance, such as those developed under the auspices of the IAEA, are essential for peaceful use. Without them, no nuclear program will earn, nor deserve the trust of our citizenry.

With respect to safety, we attach great importance to strict conformity with the appropriate Euratom directives. We also value IAEA peer exercises, and we received two of those last year.

Confidence in safety provisions should extend beyond our borders. Therefore, we will remain transparent in sharing information with our neighboring countries and we will continue implementing joint inspections in our nuclear installations. We believe this concept
of joint inspections to be an innovative tool that can improve cross-border knowledge and foster mutual trust.

Regarding nuclear security, Belgium continues its efforts to minimize the use of High Enriched Uranium (HEU) for civilian applications, when technically and economically feasible. Over the past years, we have reduced our excess stocks of HEU. Our nuclear research centre SCK•CEN, its Research Reactor BR2 and auxiliary installations, are at the forefront of international efforts to develop the next generation nuclear fuel for high performance research. High-density Low Enriched Uranium fuels are being actively developed and tested in order to enable the conversion of high performance research reactors to LEU fuel, without loss of performance, as soon as possible.