Mr. President,

France fully associates itself with the European Union's statement and I would like to add a few comments in my national capacity.

Allow me first of all to congratulate you warmly on your appointment as Chairman of this third Preparatory Committee. Rest assured of France's full support.

I would also like to acknowledge the outstanding work done by the Dutch and Polish Presidencies of the First and Second Preparatory Committees, on which it is now important to build in order to ensure continuity.

A word on a procedural issue that is key to the success of this Preparatory Committee and the upcoming Review Conference: it is crucial that the Committee approve the election of the President of the Review Conference as soon as possible, so that the Bureau is complete and able to fulfill its mandate.

Mr. President,

As the French President of the Republic said at the UNSC special meeting last September: “The non-proliferation regime is the backbone of our collective security system. We have built it decade after decade. It's still young. It requires our mobilization, our sense of responsibility and our unity”

As the international security environment continues to deteriorate and the nuclear factors is set to play an increasing role, it is crucial to preserve the integrity of existing non-proliferation norms and to consolidate a multilateral rules-based order. In particular, it is important to reaffirm, without ambiguity, the authority of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The NPT remains the cornerstone of our collective security architecture. It represents an irreplaceable bulwark against proliferation crises.

Fifty years after its signature, this treaty is an undeniable success for three reasons:

- First, since 1968, the NPT has led many States to renounce nuclear weapons, many of them having pursued a military nuclear programme before becoming party to it, others having considered it or might otherwise have been tempted to do so.
- Secondly, the NPT has enabled the peaceful development of nuclear energy and its many applications under IAEA control;
- Finally, the NPT has led to drastic reductions in nuclear arsenals in comparison to the level reached at the time of its signature, around 80% cut.

Today, the preservation of the NPT is more essential than ever, as the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery increases. In the light of these challenges, our collective responsibility must be to do everything possible to reaffirm the inviolability of the non-proliferation rule and to reject impunity.

Looking ahead to 2020, how can the NPT be preserved and strengthened?

The NPT can only be strengthened by realistic and concrete measures, within the framework of a balanced and integrated approach to its three pillars. Our roadmap is clear:
1) On the first pillar, we must promote the pursuit of progressive nuclear disarmament. All States must commit themselves to achieving a world without nuclear weapons, with undiminished security for all, and in accordance with the objective of general and complete disarmament contained in article VI of the Treaty.

- firstly, the United States and Russia, which still hold nearly 90% of the nuclear arsenals, must continue their concerted efforts to reduce their stocks. This requires the extension of the New Start Treaty in 2021 and the negotiation of a successor treaty between these two countries;

- Secondly, the negotiation at the Conference on Disarmament of a fissile material cut-off treaty, based on the Shannon mandate, is essential to exclude the risk of an arms race resumption. There can be no world without nuclear weapons without a treaty banning the production of fissile material for weapons;

- Thirdly, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains essential: it is the necessary lock to prevent the development of new weapons. We call on all States concerned to sign and ratify this instrument and to support the CTBTO;

- Four, work on the verification of nuclear disarmament is also important to build confidence between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States. Some progress has been made;

- Five, the reduction of strategic risks associated with nuclear weapons, which is based on the transparency of nuclear doctrines, dialogue between political and military leaders, crisis communication instruments and reinsurance measures. Much has been done since the birth of deterrence and efforts must continue.

- Six, the reaffirmation of negative security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States and the signing of the protocol to the nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia.

- Seven is transparency to the maximum extent possible, i.e. in compliance with security and non-proliferation requirements.

It is a collective work. As a responsible nuclear weapon state, France is pursuing its active consultation with the other four NWS in P5 format. These regular meetings allow for open exchanges, which are necessary to strengthen mutual trust and discuss disarmament in line with the evolving strategic context.

2) On the second pillar, a strong and united response to nuclear proliferation must be adopted. The highest priority is to resolve the North Korean crisis. The North Korean nuclear and ballistic threat remains. It is unacceptable. North Korea must implement the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling of its nuclear and ballistic programmes in accordance with the resolutions of this Council. Then the sanctions can be lifted. France has taken the initiative, with other partners, of a joint declaration open to co-sponsorship, in the same spirit as those of the first and second Preparatory Committees.

With regard to Iran, our objective in the nuclear field remains to preserve the JCPoA. There is no way we would accept Iran acquiring nuclear weapons.

France attaches great importance to the continued strengthening of the IAEA safeguards system. France calls on all States that have not yet done so to adopt an additional protocol.
3) On the third pillar, we must continue to promote the responsible and sustainable development of civil nuclear energy, in the best conditions of safety, security, non-proliferation and respect for the environment. It is in the context of this objective that we are presenting, together with other partners, a working document on the framework for civil nuclear cooperation, which will also be the subject of a parallel event on 7 May.

Finally, France has supported, from the outset, the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East. The succession of nuclear crises in this region, the increase in ballistic arsenals, missile transfers to non-state groups and the shameful use of chemical weapons show that the objective will not be easy to achieve but that it is essential. This includes the universalization of the NPT, the CTBT, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Convention, the Additional Protocol and a cooperative approach, involving all States in the region.

Mr. President,

France will continue to implement the 2010 action plan in each of the three pillars in accordance with this roadmap.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs said at the United Nations Security Council meeting dedicated to the NPT: "France wants the 2020 Review Conference to be a success. To do so, there is no alternative to the demanding path of cooperation and consensus if we are to live up to our collective responsibilities."

Thank you very much./.