Chair,

I am taking the floor on behalf of the initial sponsors of the Resolution 73/48 entitled “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons”, namely Brazil, Costa Rica, Ireland, Indonesia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand and my own country Austria.

1. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is an historic and ground-breaking agreement. Since it opened for signature in 2017, 70 States have signed and 23 ratified.

2. The international community has long recognised that the threat posed by the existence of nuclear weapons is among the most pressing issues facing humanity. This was acknowledged in the very first General Assembly resolution of the United Nations and reaffirmed during the height of the Cold War through the adoption of the NPT.

3. The NPT, the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime recognises “the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war” and establishes that a world without nuclear weapons would be safer for everyone without exception. Article VI enshrines the obligation to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons in the Treaty.

4. Progress on this obligation has regrettably been lagging behind the implementation of the Treaty’s other pillars. Nuclear Weapon States are modernizing their arsenals and delivery systems, overshadowing what progress on nuclear disarmament has been achieved and undermining the implementation of Article VI of the NPT.

5. The implementation of the nuclear disarmament obligation of the NPT remains unsatisfactory. Existing commitments have not been fulfilled and are being called into question by the words and actions of some States. Established arms control and disarmament instruments are being jeopardised and the growing lack of trust and rising geopolitical tensions make it more urgent than ever to strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime with the NPT at its core.

6. It was in this context, and conscious of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and inherent risks of nuclear weapons, that the vast majority of states adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7th July 2017.

Chair,

7. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are fully compatible and, indeed, complementary. After all, both the TPNW and the NPT have the same goal at their core – the abolition of nuclear weapons.

8. The new Treaty complements and strengthens the NPT. First of all, it provides a comprehensive legal prohibition of nuclear weapons. As such, this Treaty encompasses the legal element, indispensable to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.

9. The TPNW strengthens the IAEA safeguards system based on the NPT. It reaffirms the safeguards standard enshrined in NPT Article III, obliges States which already have a higher
standard in place to maintain it as a legal obligation, and encourages all States to further raise their level of commitment in terms of safeguards.

10. The TPNW strengthens the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime in general, including the Treaties establishing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). All of these instruments are complementary and are working hand in hand with the NPT. The TPNW represents a concrete manifestation of the will of the vast majority of States to eliminate nuclear weapons.

11. As such, this Treaty makes a concrete contribution to the overarching goal of the NPT, and the bargain upon which it was founded: to avert the danger of nuclear war, to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples, and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament.

Chair,

12. The current NPT review cycle, which coincides with the 50th anniversary of the Treaty, presents a significant opportunity for such progress, firmly based and building upon the undertakings agreed during the 1995 and 2000 as well as 2010 Review Conferences. We must use this opportunity to make tangible progress to rid the world of nuclear weapons. The TPNW can play an important and constructive role in this regard and we call on all States Parties to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.