Thank you, Chairperson,

My delegation echoes the sentiments expressed in the statements delivered by the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Group and the New Agenda Coalition.

Chairperson,

My delegation still maintains its long standing position that nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing processes. Therefore, progress in respect of both is essential to realise the object and purpose of the NPT. We are therefore concerned over the lack of any meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament. Our own experience is testimony that neither the possession, nor the pursuit of nuclear weapons can enhance international or regional peace and security. The idea that nuclear weapons provide some sort of an ultimate security guarantee only serves to weaken arguments against proliferation and the development of nuclear weapons by those who tend to use the very same arguments to justify their decision to pursue nuclear weapons.

Between the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and now we have continued to witness attempts to negate and reinterpret the nuclear disarmament undertakings made since then. Together with modernisation programmes and deterrence arguments, this has continued to polarise the nuclear non-proliferation regime.
Chairperson,

Article VI of the NPT makes it clear that nuclear disarmament is an obligation on all States Parties. It is therefore a shared responsibility of all States to prevent any use of nuclear weapons, to curb their proliferation and to achieve nuclear disarmament. However, for as long as these weapons exist, the threat to humanity will remain. The negative humanitarian implication, be it by accident or by design, of a nuclear weapon detonation, is too enormous to even conceive.

It has been said many times that the only way to eliminate this threat is to eliminate all nuclear weapons. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017 therefore reflects the concerns of the international community with regard to nuclear weapons. South Africa's ratification of the Treaty in February this year is without prejudice to the realization of existing nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments, including those agreed to in the NPT context and other partial measures, such as the entry-into-force of the CTBT, and the long overdue negotiation of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices.

Chairperson,

We reiterate that the goals of the NPT can never be achieved if it is seen only as a means to protect the security concerns of a few countries at the expense of humanity at large. This merely encourages proliferation, contradicts nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments, and ultimately undermines the NPT.

Nuclear weapons are inhumane weapons, and it is inconceivable that their use could ever, under any circumstances, be consistent with international law, particularly international humanitarian law. It is therefore regrettable that vast public resources are still being diverted towards the modernization of nuclear weapons. The development of new categories of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems provide a clear indication that some of the NWS continue to harbour aspirations for the indefinite retention of these instruments of destruction, contrary to their legal obligations and commitments.
Chairperson,

The 2010 NPT Review Conference not only reconfirmed the continued validity of the outcomes of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, but also included an extensive Action Plan aimed at accelerating the implementation of all Treaty provisions under the three Treaty pillars. However, urgent action is still required to fully implement the unequivocal undertaking towards nuclear disarmament and the commitments entered into at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. Concrete progress on these solemn undertakings will be essential to the success of the 2020 review cycle.

In this regard, we continue to believe that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) constitutes an important disarmament and non-proliferation measure and therefore support the establishment of new zones, particularly in the Middle East, but also in other regions.

Chairperson,

Pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we urge all nuclear-weapon States to observe their moratoria on nuclear testing and not to undertake any actions that would undermine the CTBT. We believe that the CTBT's entry into force would enhance the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and strengthen the role of multilateralism in arms control and international security.

Regrettably, the CTBT was the last Treaty to have been negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. Since then, the CD has fallen into a prolonged stalemate lasting more than twenty years. This impasse undermines the CD's credibility and its continued relevance. The Conference was established for the purpose of conducting multilateral disarmament negotiations. Anything short of this objective means that it is not executing its mandate.

In conclusion Chairperson,

We dare not become complacent about the threat posed by nuclear weapons and the lack of full implementation of the disarmament obligations flowing from Article VI. States Parties must respect the Treaty and the outcomes of its Review Conferences to maintain the continued vitality of this important legal instrument. The current security environment allows no room for further procrastination. Humanity cannot afford to wait for the "right time" to come to do away with nuclear weapons. As South Africa, we remain committed to doing our utmost to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons as we continue to live the legacy of working for a just and peaceful world.

I thank you, Chairperson.