Mr. Chair,

Let me begin by congratulating on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Preparatory Committee. I would also like to thank you and your team for the transparent and inclusive manner in which you conducted all the consultations in the lead-up to the meeting. Please be assured of my delegation’s full support.

Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union yesterday as well as with the statement made by Belgium on behalf of a group of states. I would like to make a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chair, the current international security environment is undoubtedly challenging. Recent developments have demonstrated that multilateralism is at risk, and at the same time it is only through multilateralism that the challenges that we are all facing can be successfully addressed. And the NPT Review Conference next year calls upon all of us to prove it.

In order to ensure a smooth preparatory process, this PrepCom needs to address and resolve all procedural aspects, including the nomination of the President of the Review Conference. It is essential that the President be elected as soon as possible.

2018 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the opening the NPT for signature, 2020 will mark the fiftieth anniversary since its entry into force as well as the twenty-fifth anniversary since its indefinite extension. Despite all the challenges, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has proven its relevance. It remains the cornerstone of global non-proliferation regime and the framework for nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
We firmly believe that any advance in nuclear disarmament is only possible within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and namely Article VI. Therefore, it is essential that all NPT States Parties do their part, and in particular the Nuclear Weapon States, as they bear a special responsibility. Building trust and confidence is a *condicio sine qua non* for the achievement of any tangible progress.

Therefore, a constructive, realistic and gradual approach, based on practical and implementable measures, building blocks that will strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime, is the only feasible one.

Bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty as soon as possible is one of those elements. As an Annex II state, Bulgaria has signed and ratified the Treaty and calls upon all States, in particular the remaining Annex II states, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay.

The start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) is an immediate priority as well. Initiatives in the nuclear disarmament verification area are also vital for building confidence and for reaching the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The INF Treaty has been a key element of the Euro-Atlantic security for over 30 years. However, a situation in which only one of the sides is in compliance is not sustainable. We call on the Russian Federation to return to full and verifiable compliance before 2 August, so that the treaty can be preserved.

Further efforts should be executed in the reduction of the nuclear arsenals. In this regard, we call upon the Russian Federation and the United States to work and reach an agreement on the extension of the START Treaty beyond 2021.

Mr. Chair,

The proliferation of nuclear weapons constitutes a significant threat to international peace and security. Despite the recent positive signals, the nuclear and ballistic programs of DPRK remain of great concern. DPRK needs to engage in negotiations that will lead to a complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization. We call upon DPRK to fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and to return to full compliance with NPT.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear program concluded in July 2015 is of great importance for regional and global stability. As con-
firmed by the most recent IAEA report, Iran continues to implement its nuclear related commitments. However, Iran’s ballistic missile program is a cause of serious concern. We appeal to Iran to fully comply with UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The role of the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system is key in addressing the proliferation risks and the NPT implementation as a whole.

We must continue to promote and strive for the highest standards of safety and security in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful uses. Bulgaria supports the central role of the IAEA in promoting nuclear safety and security standards. We participate in various initiatives aimed at enhancing international cooperation in different areas of nuclear energy applications.

Mr. Chair,

This review cycle is not business as usual. A lot is at stake and we must spare no efforts to ensure a successful outcome of the 2020 Review Conference. We simply cannot afford not to.

Thank you!