1. May I first of all pay tribute to Ambassador Elayne Whyte-Gómez and her team for the very useful draft they brought to the consideration of this Conference. It contains the basic points that must be included in a Convention to prohibit nuclear weapons. From now on, the task of this Conference is to make final text clear, simple and streamlined. Changes and additions should be kept to a minimum. The main objective is to express a clear rejection of nuclear weapons leading to their elimination, through the establishment of a binding norm of international law.

2. The urgent need to free the world from the threat posed by the development, manufacture, possession, stockpiling and use of the most lethal and indiscriminate of all weapons of mass destruction can no longer be postponed. The Convention to prohibit nuclear weapons will be the first international instrument in the field of disarmament to take up the call of Resolution no. 1 of the General Assembly, adopted in 1946, in the wake of the first use of atomic energy for war. Humanity had to wait for over seven decades for the first concrete step to eliminate nuclear weapons from national arsenals to become a reality.

3. May I take this opportunity to make preliminary, general comments on some aspects of the draft.

4. According to Article 1. 2(a), States party will expressly undertake to prohibit and prevent the hosting of nuclear weapons belonging to other States. This is the first time a prohibition of this kind is included in a multilateral treaty of universal scope. It must be retained in the final version of the Convention.

5. Draft Articles 4 and 5 aim at the future universality of the Convention by permitting accession by States that retain nuclear weapons, according to a mechanism inspired in the successful experience of the Convention banning certain conventional weapons. The conditions and requirements for such accession need to be made flexible and further clarified in order to promote wide participation in the Convention.

6. Some of the survivors of the use and testing of nuclear weapons – such as the hibakusha – and their descendants are still with us to remind mankind of the catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, whose destructive power today is hundreds of times superior to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs combined. Assistance to persons affected by nuclear weapons and test explosions and remediation of environmental damage contemplated in Article 6 should have as wide a reach as possible.

7. The text presented by President Whyte-Gómez wisely avoids the establishment of different categories among the Parties to the future Convention. In reaffirming the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Test-ban Treaty, as
well as nuclear weapon free zones it is important to prevent interpretations that can run counter to the purposes of the Convention.

8. The response of public and specialized opinion worldwide, particularly in States that remain initially outside the fold of the Prohibition Convention will be decisive for its evolution into a universal instrument codifying the repudiation of nuclear weapons. Organizations of civil society dedicated to peace and disarmament have an important role to play in this connection. Work on dissemination of information and on steps to promote the universalization of the Convention should begin immediately after its adoption.

9. There is great expectation on the part of the States and governmental organizations represented here for the continuation and the success of the efforts to rid the world of all weapons of mass destruction. 72 years since the start of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and 47 years since the entry into force of the NPT, the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the frightening prospect of their use still haunt mankind. The opportunity to establish an international legal norm that will prohibit such weapons and open the prospect of their complete elimination is within our grasp. It must not be squandered.