Thank you, Madame President.

A robust article on international cooperation and assistance is key to the success of the new nuclear weapon ban treaty. It will facilitate measures to address the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons and ensure affected states do not bear an undue burden for dealing with this harm.

As discussed in an earlier session, the new treaty should include not only prohibitions but also positive obligations to respond to the suffering of victims and damage to the environment. Primary responsibility for victim assistance and environmental remediation should rest with affected states for legal and practical reasons. But these countries will almost assuredly need outside help to meet their obligations. That support should come from other states parties to the nuclear weapon ban treaty.

By requiring international cooperation and assistance, the treaty will help states parties implement their obligations and thus ensure that the treaty’s agreed-on goals are achieved.

Inclusion of an international cooperation and assistance article will also provide incentives for affected states to join the new treaty. Once they become states parties, they will be entitled to a range of support.

While Article 8 of the draft text addresses this topic, it should be strengthened in several ways. These proposed amendments are based on precedent in existing disarmament treaties.

First, the article should require states parties to provide assistance as well as cooperation. Although the draft treaty gives states parties the right to seek and receive assistance, according to draft Article 8(1), other states parties are only obligated to cooperate.

Second, Article 8 should elaborate on the types of assistance states parties should provide and how they should be provided. Because international cooperation and assistance can come in a variety of forms, including technical, material, financial, and human resources, arguably all states parties would be able to contribute some type of assistance.
Third, the article should enumerate areas, including victim assistance, environmental remediation, and norm promotion, for which international cooperation and assistance is required. Such specificity will help ensure affected states parties receive the outside assistance they need.

Strengthening Article 8 in these ways is not only a matter of legal precision. It is also a humanitarian imperative because it will help ensure that the treaty addresses the human and environmental effects of nuclear weapons in a fair and effective manner.

Thank you.