Madam President,

My delegation thanks you for the astute manner in which you have been guiding these discussions. You can always count on my delegation’s continued support and cooperation towards the successful conclusion of this Conference.

Let me join other delegations to share my delegation’s perspective and views on the subject of the Preamble, Principles and Objectives.

Madam President,

In South Africa’s view, the Preamble of the treaty should not only provide the context for and scope of application envisaged under the new instrument, but also lay out general principles and objectives. In our view, the following elements should be considered for incorporation in the Preamble of the instrument:

1. In order to contextualise the treaty, reference to the first UN General Assembly resolution of 1946 dealing with the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons adaptable to mass destruction is imperative including mention of the provisions of the UN Charter relevant to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

2. The preamble also needs to recognise the ethical and moral imperatives for a world without nuclear weapons, as contained in various resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly.

3. The preamble must include the key principles of International Humanitarian Law and relevant rules, in particular the
incompatibility of the use of nuclear weapons with international law, including International Humanitarian Law.

4. The instrument should recognise the humanitarian impact of the possible detonation of nuclear device either accidental or intentionally. In particular, the preamble must recognise the destructive, inhumane and indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons, which constitute a threat to human survival. It needs to take into account the humanitarian consequences of the development, testing and use of nuclear weapons and associated risks, including their socio-economic impact which will be primarily borne primarily by women and affect future generations.

5. The preamble should affirm the objective that nuclear weapons must never be used again by any actor under any circumstances and that all efforts be made towards this end. In this regard, it should affirm the obligation of all States and their unequivocal commitment to eradicate the threat posed by nuclear weapons to human survival through the total elimination of all nuclear weapons and the legally-binding assurance that they will never be produced again.

6. The rights of victims and survivors of the use and testing of nuclear weapons should also be affirmed, as well as the responsibility of the responsible States to provide the necessary support.

7. By reaffirming the link between disarmament and development, the preamble should emphasise the need to re-allocate the vast resources spent on the development and modernisation of nuclear weapons towards socio-economic development and the achievement of the SDGs.

Madam President
8. We suggest that the preamble should also reaffirm the rights and responsibilities of States Parties to the NPT, in particular Article VI.

9. Further, the preamble must recognise the role of Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaties to build on the norm to prohibit and promote elimination of nuclear weapons.

10. Importantly, the preamble should recall the 1996 ICJ legal opinion in which the Court unanimously concluded that there exists an obligation to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

11. Finally, the preamble should emphasise, beyond the national governments, the critical role of the United Nations and civil society in disarmament education and the importance of creating awareness about the impact of nuclear weapons.

In conclusion, Madam President it is hoped that my delegation’s input will be favourable considered in the Chair’s draft, which will be deliberated on during the next session in June and July this year. In this context, South Africa remains committed to continue engaging in this process until a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons is successfully concluded.

I thank you, Madam President