Mr Chairman,

As we noted in our General Debate statement, it is clear that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty requires a sense of renewed ownership and energy from all of its States Parties in support of its full implementation. We need to look for positive outcomes across the Treaty’s remit to ensure that the constructive start to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’s review process, commenced in Vienna last April, will proceed to the achievement of concrete measurable progress at the next review conference in 2010.

New Zealand, together with Chile, Nigeria, Sweden and Switzerland, has introduced a new resolution this year, L.29, on decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems. We would welcome co-sponsorship by additional states. The resolution deserves wide support because, as highlighted by the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission last year, one of the greatest risks of nuclear catastrophe comes from the estimated thousands of nuclear weapons which remain on high alert, decades after the end of the Cold War. Such weapons could be launched in minutes in response to the perception of an attack, which might, in fact, be the result of something caused by technical malfunction, accident, or act of terrorism. De-alerting would certainly reduce the risk of nuclear conflict by allowing more time for communication and avoidance of misunderstanding or miscalculation. The resolution welcomes the steps already taken to decrease the operational readiness of their nuclear weapons systems and calls for the taking of further such practical steps. It is obvious that reductions in deployment and operational status cannot substitute for irreversible cuts in the numbers of nuclear weapons possessed, but ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert in the interim, as we work towards the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, would be a significant improvement for our collective security.

[A key theme in our discussions during both the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT this year was the need for greater transparency and confidence-building measures with respect to both the current status of nuclear arsenals and on disarmament efforts towards their destruction. We welcome Brazil’s announcement that it will run a resolution calling for global accounting with respect to nuclear arsenals. New Zealand will support this initiative, and sees such work as contributing to the attainment of concrete outcomes on increased transparency and confidence building during the current NPT review cycle.]

The voting records of this Committee illustrate overwhelming support for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and we are disappointed that the rate of progress towards this goal remains slow. Certainly, we welcome the fact that
there has been a sharp reduction in nuclear weapons from their peak at the
time of the Cold War. However, the estimated 27,000 nuclear warheads that
remain still pose the risk of catastrophic consequences if used. That risk is
increased with the proliferation of nuclear weapons capability to further
countries. That is why New Zealand will continue its efforts on both the
disarmament and non-proliferation front.

Just as the nuclear weapon states made an unequivocal commitment under
the NPT to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, non-nuclear weapon states
undertook a parallel obligation never to acquire or facilitate the proliferation of
such weapons. New Zealand takes this obligation very solemnly and
continues to be active on a number of fronts to guard against nuclear
proliferation. Through the G8 Global Partnership, New Zealand has
contributed to a project to shut down Russia’s last plutonium producing
nuclear reactor, as well as a project on the Russia/Ukraine border to combat
the smuggling of nuclear and radioactive materials. Through the Proliferation
Security Initiative, we are working with a network of states to combat the
proliferation of WMD, their delivery systems and related materials. We are
also implementing changes to our domestic export control legislation to
incorporate the facility for catch-all controls. These examples illustrate some
of the practical ways in which New Zealand is implementing its non-
proliferation commitments.

Mr Chairman,

I have already introduced L.29, on decreasing the operational readiness of
nuclear arsenals. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce two other
resolutions which New Zealand will present: with others during this year’s
session.

New Zealand, working with Brazil, will put forward L.27 calling for a nuclear-
weapon-free Southern Hemisphere and adjacent areas. A powerful symbol
for demonstrating the renunciation of weapons of mass destruction is the
reach, and potential reach, of nuclear weapon free zones over the
landmasses of the globe. Nuclear weapon free zones can act as
disarmament measures, providing an incentive for nuclear-armed or aspiring
states to pull back from the nuclear option, as well as contributing to non-
proliferation efforts. This resolution has passed by an overwhelming majority
in past years, and we hope that this will once again be the case. We have
listened carefully to the reservations of those states in opposition to the text,
which are concerned that their freedom of navigation on the high seas would
be undermined by the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone encompassing
the entire Southern Hemisphere. Let me reiterate that this resolution
specifically acknowledges the relevant rights and obligations under the
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We would be happy to be
even more explicit in this respect if it would help the states in question, but
the fact remains that as a matter of law it is simply not possible for a General
Assembly resolution to change the Law of the Sea, nor would we wish it to do so.

New Zealand will also put forward L.28, along with Australia and Mexico, a resolution on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. 11 years have passed since the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was opened for adoption in 1996. As many states stressed at the Article 14 Conference in September this year, it is imperative that this treaty enters into force as soon as possible. Universalisation of the CTBT should be a collective goal of the international community. In particular, those Annex 2 States that have signed but not ratified, should make the ultimate expression of support for the Treaty by ratifying it without delay. We hope that states will again demonstrate their strong support for the treaty by voting for this resolution.