Mr Chair

Norway is firmly committed to multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation. But for multilateralism to work, an intergovernmental machinery is required which can produce substantive outcomes.

The structure of the present machinery in the field of disarmament was established at the First Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General Assembly (SSOD I) in 1978. Today, 31 years later, we live in a different world.

In recent years we have regrettably witnessed that key multilateral bodies have struggled to live up to our expectations, or even worse, been completely paralysed. Having said this, we have also witnessed some impressive achievements such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Mine Ban Convention, which for more than ten years have delivered results. We have great expectations that the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) will deliver similar outcomes.

But it is a sad fact that the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) have not delivered anything of substance for more than a decade. We are pleased to note that the CD this year finally managed to adopt a programme of work, but find it disturbing that it was unable to start the much needed negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) in 2009.
We also question the notion that the CD is to be defined as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, as more than 120 UN member states are excluded from the process.

2010 will be critical to the CD. If this body continues not to deliver, we should ask ourselves whether this institution in its existing format serves our interests. Time has come for looking into the working methods of the CD to ensure that it becomes more inclusive. Any credible and relevant multilateral negotiating body should be open to any country. Further we have to implement working methods that do not allow countries to single-handedly bring work to a standstill, which ultimately will lead to marginalisation and irrelevance.

We should ask the same questions about the UN Disarmament Commission. This body, which was intended to be a deliberative forum, has had great difficulties in delivering substantial deliberations and recommendations to the disarmament work.

If we are to preserve the UNDC, we must make it more practical, more focussed and more relevant. We continue to believe that regular UNDC sessions should be much shorter and focus on one or two topics, decided by the UNGA First Committee.

Given its deliberative mandate, we remain convinced that outcomes of UNDC sessions could take form of a chair’s summary, which could reflect which areas consensus might be emerging.

Mr. Chair

Given its universal nature, we consider the First Committee of the UN General Assembly as fundamental in advancing the work on disarmament and non-proliferation. Norway has for several years advocated an improvement of the working methods of the First Committee in order to make this body more relevant in addressing security challenges. While we have witnessed some progress in the way the Committee works, much more remains to be done.

In this respect we would like to reiterate our view on some of the working methods of the resolutions. Each year we witness huge efforts in mobilising the highest number of co-sponsors to resolutions. Is this approach the best way to make use of our time and energy? If we could agree on limiting the habit of seeking co-sponsorship to only newly introduced resolutions, we would improve the efficiency of the First Committee.

Further, it is our view that when a resolution has been adopted it will stand unless otherwise decided. This would enable us to reduce the number of repetitive resolutions, and make more time available for substantive and focused discussions. We also note that too many resolutions have nearly identical texts to previous years, and have thus not taken into account emerging new political opportunities to move the disarmament agenda forward.
Mr Chair

This year’s session of the First Committee takes place in the wake of the historic summit of UN Security Council. Resolution No.1887 sent a strong political message about the overall objective of creating a world without nuclear weapons.

This session of the First Committee should in Norway’s view have two objectives: to build consensus on the need for the multilateral disarmament machinery to produce results, and to foster a common understanding of how existing and new security threats should be addressed. This would also give immense weight to the upcoming Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in May 2010.

It is clearly not evident that the Committee has succeeded in this task. If we do not renew this body, we will continue to experience that other institutions, such as the UN Security Council, will assume increased responsibility for disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

In order to advance the First Committee’s work on disarmament and non-proliferation, we see the wisdom of convening a Fourth Session on Disarmament under the UN General Assembly (SSODIV), provided that we can agree on adjusting our multilateral negotiating bodies to better respond to the window of opportunity which is now emerging. Reaching such an agreement will not be easy, but still possible, provided that all UN member states are ready to contribute in a constructive manner.

Thank you Mr. Chair