Mr. Chair,

Forty years after the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty entered into force we are still living with the risk of nuclear annihilation.

What does give rise to optimism, however, is the growing consensus over the past couple of years on the need to eliminate these weapons. The utility of nuclear weapons as military and political instruments are increasingly questioned, and the humanitarian consequences should a nuclear weapon ever be used, are widely recognized as so horrendous that few can imagine a situation in which such weapons actually would be used.

Thus, if we agree on the inhumane character of nuclear weapons, it is a paradox that these weapons continue to play such a prominent role in security policies. It is all the more of a paradox when we consider the possibility of accidental nuclear war, either due to miscalculations or malfunctions. A shocking number of these weapons remain on high alert, ready for launch on warning. Equally terrifying is the thought of terrorists getting their hands on such weapons.

Mr. Chair,

The NPT Review Conference in May reaffirmed that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. Yet, when non-nuclear weapons states call for more ambitious commitments on part of the nuclear weapons states towards this goal, we are told to be realistic and patient.

(Check against delivery)
But is patience really what is called for in today’s situation? We have been patient. The nuclear weapons states committed themselves to the elimination of their nuclear arsenals forty years ago. The Cold War ended two decades ago. No wonder patience is wearing thin. And why should it be unrealistic to expect more from the nuclear weapon states? What we are asking for is fully achievable. Most states have never possessed nuclear weapons, some have renounced them. It is a matter of political choice and direction. A world free of nuclear weapons should, realistically, be within reach provided sufficient political will. The task of getting rid of these weapons need not, and should not, be left to future generations.

Therefore, on the basis of impatient realism, we have high expectations of the progress reports by the nuclear weapons states on the implementation of their nuclear disarmament commitments to the NPT PrepCom in 2014.

With regard to the NPT decision on the Middle East, Norway is prepared to assist to ensure that the conference in 2012 becomes a significant contribution towards the creation of a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the region.

More than half the countries in the world are now covered by nuclear weapons free zones and more states continue to join. Such zones are important tools both for non-proliferation and disarmament. They serve to underline that there is no real rationale for maintaining a category of weapons that should not – and could not – be used.

We must ensure that our systems of verification are robust enough to provide the necessary confidence both in non-proliferation and in disarmament, and that disarmament takes place in accordance with the principles of verifiability, irreversibility and transparency.

The United Kingdom and Norway have been working together on verification of nuclear warheads dismantlement. In December, Norwegian experts will conduct a trial inspection in the UK. If successful, the test will demonstrate how international inspectors can access sensitive sites without violating the non-proliferation regime, and without gaining access to other sensitive information.

We must all do our part to implement and further strengthen non-proliferation obligations. This includes implementing the IAEA Additional Protocol. In a world free of nuclear weapons, the IAEA comprehensive safeguards and the Additional Protocol should be seen as the verification standard. Ideally, all states should have qualified for integrated safeguards.

Outstanding proliferation concerns must be resolved through more vigorous efforts. Norway continues to urge Iran to heed the calls by the UN and fully cooperate with the IAEA. It is up to Iran to demonstrate that its nuclear programme only serves peaceful purposes. No one denies Iran the right to benefit from peaceful uses.

Likewise, Norway remains deeply concerned by DPRK’s nuclear weapons programme, and fully supports efforts to revive the consultations among the most concerned states.
Furthermore, we must continue our efforts at developing cooperative arrangements on production of nuclear fuel for civilian reactors and handling of nuclear waste, and to reduce the use of highly enriched uranium in civilian nuclear research reactors, and to convert these reactors to run on low-enriched uranium. Indeed, nuclear security goes hand in hand with nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The upcoming NPT Review Cycle will be critical. This is not a time for complacency. We must all do our part to ensure the full implementation of the Action Plan adopted at the Review Conference.

Norway welcomes recent steps towards bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force. It will bring us one step closer to a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chair, to conclude,

The threat we face from nuclear weapons is a man-made problem. So, it can only be solved by men’s – and women’s – imagination, innovation, political will and perseverance.

Thank you.