Thank you, Mr Chair,

After more than a decade of stalemate in the field of disarmament, recent developments give a glimmer of hope for the decade that we have just entered.

First: We were able to reach agreement at the NPT Review Conference in May on 64 concrete actions to strengthen nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. While Norway would have welcomed even stronger language, we still think that the Review Conference was as successful as could reasonably be expected at this stage.

Secondly; the two countries with the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons have recently signed a new START agreement,

Thirdly, there have been more frequent references to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons among key leaders and experienced statesmen than in many years,

And not the least, a wide-ranging ban on cluster munitions was achieved with the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions this fall.

Taken together, these developments suggest that there is a new momentum in the area of international disarmament. This is, indeed, good news.

(Check against delivery)
But it also means that the United Nations disarmament apparatus will have to step up to the plate and re-energize its working methods. If not, the principal multilateral fora that we have put in place to deal with this crucially important area will simply be relegated to a secondary role.

This is a serious challenge. Both the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the United Nations Disarmament Commission are (UNDC) are – to be honest – highly dysfunctional bodies today. It is up to us to make the choice between renewed relevance or oblivion.

Mr. Chair;

An estimated 2000 people are killed every day by the effects of armed violence, including by anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, and through the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Norway is a strong supporter of an effective Arms Trade Treaty. We believe such a treaty could provide a unique opportunity for the international community to make a difference, by establishing norms and regulations that can reduce the human suffering caused by illicit and poorly regulated arms trade. In our view, such a treaty would help to prevent and reduce armed violence through improved regulation of international arms transfers.

Experience gained from the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions has shown the usefulness of effective cross-regional partnerships. Combined with the will to work in innovative and creative ways it is possible to make a difference and achieve meaningful results. Another important lesson is that we achieve more by engaging all relevant stakeholders in such processes.

Both these conventions prohibit weapons that are inherently indiscriminate. In addition, they are comprehensive agreements that provide frameworks for implementation, including provisions for adequate assistance to survivors.

In this vein, as we approach the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security let me reiterate the need to include the gender dimension in all disarmament efforts.

Mr Chair,

Weapons that cause unnecessary suffering and unacceptable harm have no place in today’s international security environment, and it is in our mutual interest to establish norms and legally-binding rules for the elimination of such weapons.

The humanitarian dimension is of course as valid for nuclear weapons as for conventional weapons. This was a message from the NPT Review Conference in May, which expressed deep concern over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the actual use of nuclear weapons. We also welcome the reaffirmation by the Review Conference of the need for all states at all times to comply with international humanitarian law.
Political leaders, military strategists and humanitarian activists increasingly find themselves in agreement on the ultimate goal of totally eliminating the most inhumane, indiscriminate and disproportional weapons of all.

Among the members of NATO, this topic is now also a part of ongoing discussions about a new strategic concept, due to conclude in November this year: Is it possible to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in the Alliance’s deterrence doctrine, as a contribution to the global quest for nuclear disarmament? Together with concerned allies, Norway is actively promoting the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda in this and other relevant fora.

Mr. Chair,

If we actually want to move forward, we need to reframe the question from one of whether a world free of nuclear weapons is feasible to one of how to actually achieve it, and how it can be undertaken in a secure, irreversible and verifiable manner. We should be under no illusion that the countries that currently possess such weapons will be ready to give them up as long as we do not have rock-solid mechanisms for verification and a credible system for preventing that any party return to nuclear status.

The overall objective of the NPT must, eventually, be codified in a legally binding instrument. A combination of both bilateral and multilateral verification arrangements will be needed. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will play a key role in safeguarding fissile materials. We must provide the political, financial and technical support necessary to ensure full confidence in the disarmament process. For a number of years, Norway and the UK have cooperated on a project on verifying the dismantlement of nuclear warheads. This effort is being continued with an exercise in the UK this year. We consider this a concrete contribution towards our goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chair,

Progress on nuclear disarmament is inherently linked to an effective non-proliferation regime. Nuclear weapons are a manifest threat to our common security, and they cannot be seen as legitimate means of advancing national interests — whether political or military.

With thousands of people dying every day because of armed violence, and with the continuous risk of accidental, miscalculated or even deliberate use of nuclear weapons, there is no time for deadlocks, secrecy and procedural hang-ups and inhibitions. We must find effective ways to work together in order to eliminate these threats to our own security.

This is in our common interest — as state representatives and as human beings — and it is our common responsibility.

Thank you.