Thank you, Mr Chair,

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you and the Bureau on assuming the chairmanship of this body, and to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Mr Chair,

Weapons that cause unnecessary suffering and unacceptable harm should have no place in today’s international security environment. We have a responsibility to the world’s citizens to explore effective ways to work together to eliminate these existential threats to the security of our world and the societies we live in. We cannot continue to allow these important issues to continue to be deferred by deadlocks and procedural snags. Our credibility is at stake.

Forty years after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force, we are still living in a world with nuclear weapons. The NPT Review Conference last year achieved concrete results in the form of the Action Plan that was adopted. But only implementation can bring us from diplomatic achievement to genuine results. In the light of this, we are pleased to note that the P5 has decided to come together on a regular basis in order to meet their obligations under the NPT Action Plan, and we look forward to seeing concrete and bold steps by the nuclear weapons states to this end.
An important item in the NPT Action Plan is the Middle East Conference on a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in 2012. More than half of the world’s countries have freely joined such zones, which underpins the simple fact that security is strengthened by not maintaining a category of devastating weapons that must never be used again. Norway will do its utmost to ensure that the Middle East Conference on a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction is a reality.

We must all do our part to implement and further strengthen non-proliferation obligations. This includes implementing the IAEA comprehensive safeguards and the IAEA Additional Protocol. The IAEA must be fully equipped to carry out its crucial non-proliferation task. Norway has on a number of occasions expressed deep concern over the outstanding proliferation challenges, such as those posed by Iran, Syria and DPRK. A political solution to these issues would greatly strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

Norway fully supports the Action Plan adopted at the Nuclear Security Summit last year and looks forward to reviewing our commitments to this end in Seoul next year. We must secure all nuclear material. We must continue our efforts to develop cooperative arrangements for producing nuclear fuel for civilian reactors, and we must significantly reduce the use of highly enriched uranium in civilian nuclear research reactors. All of these tasks are doable, and they will enhance the security of us all.

There is also a need to ensure that our verification systems are robust enough to provide the necessary confidence in the integrity of both non-proliferation and disarmament processes, based on the principles of verifiability, irreversibility and transparency.

The United Kingdom and Norway have cooperated at exert level for a number of years on exploring technical and procedural challenges associated with a possible future nuclear disarmament verification regime.

I am very pleased that the United Kingdom will, in partnership with Norway, host a workshop in London in early December to consider lessons learned from the UK-Norway Initiative so far. The purpose of the workshop is to demonstrate that Nuclear Weapon State and Non-Nuclear Weapon State collaboration in nuclear disarmament verification is both possible and necessary.

Mr Chair,

The Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions demonstrate that it is possible to negotiate multilateral instruments within disarmament that have an immediate humanitarian effect on the ground and that strengthen the protection of civilians. This is possible when there is a common sense of purpose across traditional groupings, when our work builds on the facts and realities on the ground, and when the representatives of states recognise, acknowledge and make use of the undisputed expertise and competence of humanitarian organisations.
Mr Chair,

It is not acceptable that disarmament fora and existing instruments of international humanitarian law are used to take steps in the wrong direction, to take steps that would diminish protection of civilians, to attempt to re-legitimise weapons banned by a majority of states because of their documented humanitarian detrimental effects. Through the current negotiations on cluster munitions within the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, states are in danger of doing exactly this. Let me make it very clear: Norway cannot accept a result in the CCW that is contradictory to our obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and that will not have added humanitarian value. In our view, the approach taken by the Chair of the Group of Governmental Experts has not brought us closer to an acceptable outcome. During the last meeting of the GGE in August, Austria, Mexico and Norway therefore presented an Alternative Draft Protocol that was met with a high degree of interest from many delegations. We stand ready to discuss our proposal further with all states and other partners. However, the GGE concluded that there was no consensus in the group. In accordance with the mandate of the Review Conference it could be time to accept that this is the conclusion of the work in the GGE.

2000 people are killed every day due to armed violence. The irresponsible proliferation of conventional weapons continues to fuel conflicts and contribute to an ongoing humanitarian disaster. The human costs and the long term development consequences of this is unacceptable. It is therefore urgent and necessary that we approach the ongoing work on an Arms Trade Treaty with a clear ambition of making a real difference for civilians. Our multilateral response to the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of weapons should be based on the principles and perspective that weapons control and disarmament are also essential humanitarian actions.

Mr Chair,

Let me also take this opportunity to underscore that 2011 is a critical year for the Biological Weapons Convention. The upcoming Review Conference must build on the positive momentum created five years ago and consider ways to further strengthen national implementation of the Convention. One way would be to further strengthen the confidence-building measures. National reporting should be considered as an obligation, not a matter of choice. More efforts are needed in the field of biological security and safety. Norway values the supporting role of the Implementation Support Unit of the BTWC and expects that the unit will be given a strengthened mandate. The Review Conference should also facilitate closer international cooperation on the peaceful use of biological science and technologies.

Mr Chair,

Norway fully subscribes to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, and we would like to see even more ambitious steps on nuclear disarmament. There have long been calls for negotiations on a legally-binding convention, in line with the provisions of Article VI of the NPT Treaty. Norway acknowledges the need – and obligation – to negotiate such an instrument, in good faith and in accordance with the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in 1996.
However, Norway has questioned the call by many states for the negotiation of such an instrument to be conducted in the Conference on Disarmament. We do not believe such an important issue should be left to a body that has been unable to deliver anything of substance in a decade and a half, that cannot even agree on a programme of work, and whose membership is limited to a third of UN member states.

As an alternative, we should look at ways to utilise the General Assembly to ensure progress. Norway joins other Member States in calling for a resolution at this year's session of the First Committee which will enable us to move forward multilateral disarmament negotiations. It is high time to give the CD a definite deadline and indicate a clear alternative to another year of inaction.

Finally,

Effective multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation is more needed than ever. The UN Member States have an obligation to ensure that our multilateral institutions are equipped to deliver what is expected of them. This is the reality we should bring with us to the First Committee.

Thank you!