STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Mårten Grunditz
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sweden

On behalf of the New Agenda Coalition
(Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden)

at the

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -
Mr Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the seven members of the New Agenda Coalition: Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and my own country, Sweden.

We warmly welcome your appointment as Chair of this year’s First Committee and look forward to supporting and co-operating with you over the coming weeks.

Mr Chairperson,

Advancing nuclear disarmament remains the raison d'être and the enduring focus of the New Agenda Coalition. As stated in the 1998 founding Declaration of the NAC, the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons and the possibility of their use or threat of use by nuclear-weapon States continue to pose a threat to humanity. In that Declaration, NAC Ministers called on the nuclear-weapon States to immediately start work on the practical steps required to achieve nuclear disarmament. The sentiments expressed then are still relevant today. Whilst modest gains have been made, it is clear that the threat posed by nuclear weapons persists and that the objectives of Article VI of the NPT are far from being met.

Ever since the Coalition’s establishment some 14 years ago, we have worked towards the fulfillment of the NPT’s objectives and overarching goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential part of the global security regime. The NAC calls on all States Parties to spare no effort to achieve the universality of the NPT, and to desist from actions that could negatively affect prospects in this regard.

We wish to recall the grand bargain struck by all State Parties to the NPT, whereby the nuclear-weapon States committed to nuclear disarmament, in return for which the non-nuclear-weapon States undertook not to develop nuclear weapons. NPT States Parties also affirmed the inalienable right to pursue the peaceful development of research, production and use of nuclear energy. In 1995, the decisions on principles and objectives and the strengthened review process, and the Resolution on the Middle East were the basis on which the Treaty was indefinitely extended.

The NPT needs to be fully implemented. Each Article is equally binding on the respective States Parties at all times and in all circumstances. The current challenges to the full implementation of the Treaty must be met with a common purpose and concrete action, as the NPT’s long-term success is dependent on the realization of all its objectives.

Over the years, significant progress has been made to meet the nuclear non-proliferation objectives of the NPT, limiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. The nuclear disarmament side of the NPT bargain, however, has yet to be realised.
Mr Chairperson,

The Action Plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference was an important step forward that holds the potential to put the process towards a nuclear-weapon-free world back on track. The nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, and committed to accelerating progress in this regard. This reaffirmed the decisions taken in 1995 and 2000, including the 13 practical steps, to advance the implementation of Article VI of the NPT. Furthermore, the Action Plan reemphasizes the commitment to apply the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in relation to nuclear disarmament measures.

We welcome the renewed and growing interest in nuclear disarmament seen in recent years and the growing support more broadly for a world free of nuclear weapons. In our quest for the elimination of nuclear weapons, it is critical that remaining challenges be tackled head-on. We are deeply concerned that the longstanding deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament continues to hamper efforts to make progress on nuclear disarmament issues. These include, amongst others, the commencement of substantive work on nuclear disarmament, including the conclusion of a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices that should fulfil both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. They also encompass the need to give effect to the legitimate interest of the non-nuclear-weapons States in receiving unequivocal and legally-binding security assurances from the nuclear-weapon States.

Continued and enhanced transparency is essential. States that are part of military alliances, which include nuclear-weapon States, could contribute to this by reporting on steps planned to reduce and eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in collective security doctrines.

Regarding the process leading to the full implementation of the 1995 NPT resolution on the Middle East, the NAC has welcomed the appointment of the Under-Secretary of State Jaako Laajava of Finland as the facilitator and the designation of Finland as the host government for the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, to be attended by all States of the Middle East. We look forward to the successful convening of this important Conference, which is an essential element of the 2015 NPT Review Cycle. We call on the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Depository States of the NPT to continue to exert all their efforts to assist the facilitator in securing a successful conference.

Mr Chairperson,

The NAC would like to reiterate that all states should work towards the construction of a comprehensive framework of mutually reinforcing instruments for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. Such a legally-binding framework for
the total elimination of all nuclear weapons must include clearly defined benchmarks and timelines, backed by a strong system of verification, in order to be efficient and credible.

Mr Chairperson,

As in previous years, the Coalition will present a draft resolution to this Committee. The resolution will be described in some detail during the thematic debate on nuclear weapons. We are happy to discuss the text of the resolution with any Member State wishing to do so. We hope that the growth in support for our resolution, which has been seen in recent years, will continue this year.

Given the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, we remain convinced that the only guarantee for a safe and peaceful world is the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons, irrespective of their type or location. No nuclear weapon can ever be safe in any hands, whether state or non-state actor. As long as these weapons exist, the possibility of their use, whether by accident or design, will remain. Similarly, as long as some states continue to possess nuclear weapons, citing security reasons for doing so, others may aspire to acquire them. And, as the NAC has always maintained, what does not exist cannot proliferate. It is for these reasons, Mr Chairperson, that the NAC remains steadfast in working for accelerated implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments so that a nuclear-weapon-free world can be realised.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.