President,

The global security landscape is unpredictable and challenging. Fundamental norms are coming under pressure. We are deeply worried about the inadequate protection of civilians in conflict, and the destruction of critical infrastructure such as housing, schools and hospitals. We are today witnessing the use of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture is being challenged.

Norway is fully committed to the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. To achieve this, we must foster the confidence needed for balanced, mutual, irreversible and verifiable reductions of nuclear arsenals in the future. This will enable us to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, regulated by a legal framework.
This is a long-term goal, and success will depend on the active participation and cooperation of both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states. Achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons will require persistence, realism and patience. For this reason, Norway will not sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and stands firmly behind the NATO statement of 20 September 2017.

We must uphold and further strengthen the NPT. We must consolidate existing disarmament agreements, such as the New START and the INF. We urge the nuclear-weapon states to seek further reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons.

Credible verification tools can ensure the necessary assurances that disarmament obligations have been fulfilled, and can help to build the confidence needed to make new and deeper cuts. Nuclear disarmament verification will remain a Norwegian priority.

Norway remains committed to further diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies, in ways that promote international stability and security. Norway fully supports a fact-based approach to the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

Norway is urgently advocating the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). There is an urgent need to negotiate and conclude a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), which could also include a phased approach to the elimination of existing stocks.

Achieving a world without nuclear weapons will require a robust and credible non-proliferation regime. This means having the highest possible standards for IAEA safeguards and nuclear security. Norway has a particular focus on minimising and eventually eliminating the use of highly enriched uranium in the civilian sector. We are convinced that this will facilitate peaceful uses of nuclear technology.
The deplorable nuclear and missile tests recently carried out by the DPRK constitute a threat to the non-proliferation agenda and to international peace and security. They clearly undermine the prospects for nuclear disarmament. We urge the DPRK to take the necessary steps to facilitate a diplomatic solution to this crisis.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) shows that it is possible to achieve important results through diplomacy, even when the point of departure is difficult. It is essential that all parties live up to their commitments and obligations, and refrain from any action that undermines the integrity of the JCPOA.

President,

Twenty years after the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we are regrettably seeing the continued use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government and by terrorists. We must address this as a matter of urgency. The perpetrators must be held accountable. At the same time, we welcome the completion of the verified destruction of Russia’s chemical weapons programme. It is an important milestone in the history of the Convention.

Norway was disappointed with the outcome of the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention. We hope and anticipate that the forthcoming Meeting of States Parties will enable us to improve preparedness for suspicious outbreaks of disease, address relevant developments in the life sciences, and consider emerging challenges. The credibility of the BTWC is at stake.

Let me also reiterate Norway’s commitment to the peaceful use of outer space. Norway is seeking to participate in global forums such as COPUOS. Moreover, we believe that the Conference on Disarmament’s deliberations on this matter could be valuable.
President,

Armed violence carried out using conventional weapons continues to constitute a threat to peace, security, human security and development.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty. Over the last 20 years, 51 million landmines have been destroyed, and countless civilian lives have been spared. A mine-free world by 2025 remains our ambition. Sadly, over the last few years we have seen an increase in the use of improvised landmines as tools of war. The number of civilian casualties from landmines is once again increasing.

Next year, the global community will commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Cluster Munitions Convention, which is another instrument that has made a substantial difference to human security. However, we are unfortunately seeing the continued use of these weapons, too, in a number of conflicts.

Small arms and light weapons kill more than half a million people every year. We must therefore intensify our efforts to combat any irresponsible and illegal trade in or use of such weapons, including ammunition. The Arms Trade Treaty establishes fundamental norms for responsible trade in conventional arms, including with regard to assessing the potential for gender-based violence before an arms export is authorised. We are pleased that the ATT is gaining ground.

We must also seek to further strengthen the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The third Review Conference will provide us with an opportunity to do so.

This year’s First Committee sessions should give us an opportunity to strengthen multilateral cooperation in the areas of arms control and security. We must seize this opportunity. Thank you.

(Check against delivery)