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Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations

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Mr. Chair,

Thank Patricia Lewis for insightful presentation on measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear weapons detonations. As you said, the probability of a detonation is not zero, but real.

We have the fact-based knowledge of the catastrophic impact and consequences, both in the short and long term, of a nuclear detonation, and irrespective of cause, this should intensify efforts on moving forward nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and nuclear security.

Evidently, the best preventive measure of risks is the full elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible, and verifiable way.

At the same time, on the way towards zero, there are a number of steps that must be taken in order to address the question on risks.

We must ensure that no sensitive material falls into the hands of terrorist groups. The NSS process is in this regard highly relevant. Norway has in this process emphasized the urgency of securing and minimizing use of highly enriched uranium and radioactive materials. The role of the IAEA must be further strengthened in the field of nuclear security. It is highly important that the 2005 amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (CPPNM) will enter into force on 8 May. We must continue advocating its universalization, together with the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Talking about nuclear material, at the last NSS, Norway, together with 21 other countries, made a Joint Statement on minimization and elimination of HEU in civilian sector.

In addition, we need to prohibit new production of fissile material for weapons purposes and, not least, we must work harder on existing stocks. Dismantlement of nuclear weapons must be accompanied by enhanced transparency in the elimination of stocks and development of credible verification tools.

On the question on the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, NPT commitments from 2010 are imperative, such as reducing the number of deployed nuclear weapons, and reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security. As reflected in a working paper Norway has co-sponsored, de-alerting nuclear weapon systems would reduce risks and build confidence among nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States.
Transparency and confidence building measures are essential elements in reducing risks. Assurances are also important elements in mitigating any possible nuclear catastrophe, and should be explored further. In this respect, we welcome the working paper on negative security assurances.

My delegation agrees that there is a need to increase awareness and knowledge on minimizing risk. Likewise, my delegation agrees that we should strive to develop practical proposals on reducing and eliminating risks, which we can all agree.

Thank you,