Mr. Chair,

This morning’s interventions have again highlighted the catastrophic humanitarian impact of a nuclear detonation and brought some additional useful insights.

They have demonstrated how testimonies of survivors like the one of Mrs Setsuko Thurlow are critical in awareness raising and show the importance of conducting research and of spreading information and of education in this regard.

Belgium has experienced the devastating effects of II world wars. I am referring in particular to the First World War.

This explains why we are firmly engaged in cooperation with civil society, in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education, which, inter alia, contributes to raising public awareness of the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

The concern for the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons underpins my countries efforts to promote nuclear disarmament.

My country joined other nations to express its concern over the issue in various joint statements at the UN General Assembly. It participated in the international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna.

Belgium’s position from the start with regard to the humanitarian initiative has been characterized by engagement but a critical one. Engaged because Belgium wants to contribute to a world without nuclear weapons and stands open to all initiatives that can contribute to this objective in a concrete and effective way. We were at the same time critical because from the start we were concerned about how the initiative could unfold in a parallel process risking having a negative impact on the existing NPT framework.

This morning, an almost automatic link has been made between an increased awareness about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the necessity for concluding immediately a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

My country supports the progressive approach and as stated before is driven in its efforts by its concern over the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. As other countries here present, we do not think that a short cut to nuclear disarmament is possible and that the adoption of a ban treaty now,
before some essential incremental steps have been taken, will allow us to address these concerns in an efficient way.

This morning, panelists spoke out in favor of the adoption of a ban treaty. In a context where a number of states and in particular the nuclear weapon states would not yet be ready to subscribe to such a treaty because of a number of security concerns and would continue to consider the NPT as the only valid international legal framework, there would actually be a situation of international legal insecurity and increased mistrust amongst nations. My delegation is concerned that this actually could lead to less willingness to share information and to undermining the increased transparency measures we are actually pursuing and have been discussing over the last few days.

I thank you.