Statement by Ambassador Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, Head of the Brazilian Delegation to the Open-Ended Working Group taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations

Panel III: Additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the complexity of and interrelationship among the wide range of humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear detonation

Geneva, 4 May 2016

Mr. Chair,

I would like to thank Dr Ira Helfand (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War) and Ms. Sara Sekkenes (UNDP) for their excellent presentations. Brazil fully supports the ideas and proposals contained in Section III-C and Annex IV of the “synthesis paper”, regarding additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

I would like to underline how useful and pertinent it would be for the Chair of this OEWG to extract from the presentations elements that could help us signify the tragic dimensions of the humanitarian impact of a nuclear detonation in support of multilateral action towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Assessment of impact with measurability of the dire consequences of a nuclear explosion, as Mr. Helfand has done, help us bring to the fore the need for making progress on nuclear disarmament, paving the way for negotiations.

Ms. Sekkenes, in a complementary presentation, emphasized the need to think of the unacceptable humanitarian impact of a nuclear explosion not in the abstract, but in association with our discussion on humanitarian international law, the Humanitarian Summit and other frameworks that attempt to deal with the interrelation of peace, security and development. I would recall, in this regard, goal 16 of the 2030 SDGs on building peaceful and inclusive societies and all other SDGs that are integrated, indivisible and applicable to all. In general, the existence of nuclear weapons places the goals of the sustainable development agenda at risk. It is clear we do not have the means to deal with the impact a nuclear detonation.

The Humanitarian Initiative reinforced the perception that urgent action is needed in order to prevent a global humanitarian catastrophe, which would result from any nuclear detonation, accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional. Brazil believes it is high time to declare both the use and the possession of nuclear weapons as unacceptable. We must deal with the great neglected threat of nuclear arms. A comprehensive assessment of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons can only lead to the conclusion that these weapons are illegitimate and, therefore, should be outlawed and ultimately eliminated.