Mr. Chairman,

As mentioned in our statement on Monday, on April 28 our Parliament discussed nuclear disarmament as a result of a citizen’s initiative. In the context of this OEWG, our Parliament expressed the wish that we actively work on effective measures on nuclear disarmament, including a ban on nuclear weapons. Although that particular resolution has not been adopted at this point, our Minister stated it will be carried out “in the context of the chronological disarmament steps as they are foreseen in Article VI NPT.” These are: an end to the nuclear arms race, nuclear disarmament, and a treaty on general and complete disarmament under international control.

Success is attainable through several intermediate and parallel steps, culminating in a comprehensive, verifiable legal instrument banning nuclear weapons that enjoys active support of NWS and NNWS alike. Today we discuss the possible pathways to get to global zero.

Rather than focusing on the differences between the pathways, for a common way forward it would be better to explore commonalities, as you have attempted in your Syntheses paper. Indeed, one of the positive notes of these discussions is that we all seem to agree on our ultimate goal. The task before us is to elaborate a plan, together, on how to get there.

In this regard, it may be helpful to look at the history of the conventions on biological and chemical weapons. The Netherlands has co-sponsored a working paper which does just that – and which I will come back to in more detail at a later stage this week.

For example, these types of WMD were negotiated in conjunction in the late 1960s. However, it became clear that agreement on a ban on chemical weapons was still far away, while a biological weapons instrument was tenable. Our predecessors were pragmatic and realistic, and concluded the BWC.

The lesson here is that while a blanket ban may not enjoy the support of the nuclear weapon possessors at this point, perhaps this OEWG could encourage a dialogue on which specific types of nuclear weapons are currently the most destabilizing and therefore most dangerous. The history of eliminating Biological and Chemical weapons teaches us that partial bans in this sense have been instituted before.

Moreover, a ban on nuclear weapons would contain prohibitions on use, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer and other activities related to nuclear weapons. Again, looking at for example chemical weapons, we can see that for a long time many states effectively adopted a no first use approach, constituting at least a partial ban on use.

Some headway has been made in this direction in the realm of nuclear weapons, as well. For example, NWS have ratified protocols to the NWFZ treaties and issued declarations and statements through the UNSC concerning the use of nuclear weapons. At the same time, the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines has been restricted by national policies and declarations. Perhaps it would be feasible to look into this issue further and see where progress can be made. In this context I would like to draw your attention to the paper on security assurances that was submitted to this OEWG by Belgium, Canada, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden.

Reductions in nuclear weapons stocks are, of course, a necessary element of nuclear disarmament in the wider sense. There is no doubt that the world needs a follow-up to New START, which could include an expanded verification system. At the same time, different types of nuclear weapons may possibly be included. And other states could slowly be drawn into setting caps on national arsenals, for example through protocols to US-Russia agreements. Again, I would like to encourage this OEWG to come up with ideas and recommendations in this area.
Mr. Chairman,

Legal measures that encourage us closer to zero are not sufficient to attain a nuclear-weapon-free world. We also need measures that cap the potential of building new nuclear weapons. After all, effective disarmament requires that dismantled weapons cannot simply be replaced by others.

That is why this OEWG must encourage, and think of ways to stimulate, the entry into force of the CTBT. We can work with states possessing nuclear weapons to reinforce the norm of non-testing, pending the necessary ratifications. Moreover, we should do our utmost to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the CTBTO.

A step that we can take right now is to promote the negotiation of a treaty on fissile materials. We have heard many expressions of support for such an instrument, but that does not take away the fact that it has been delayed for too long. So how to move forward? The GGE was a good first step. What is next? Can this OEWG come up with recommendations? What kind of materials should be controlled? Under what level of verification? And should an instrument include existing stocks?

The NL considers the NPT a cornerstone for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This Treaty contains through Article VI, a clear legal obligation on nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, the nuclear weapons states have, through the NPT review conferences, reaffirmed the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI.

We have consistently advocated the full implementation of the disarmament obligations of the NPT and has made substantial contributions to this end. At the same time, we share the frustration that the pace in quantitative reductions of arsenals is too slow. We share the frustration of the lack of entry into force of essential supporting legally binding instruments on a comprehensive test ban as well on fissile material.

Our prime challenge is to continue advocating full adherence to the NPT-obligations, including the outcome documents of the Treaty’s review conferences.

This morning Sweden mentioned the idea of a possible instrument through the creation of an additional protocol to the NPT. It would be an elaboration of Article VI and would include similar elements for a nuclear weapons convention, a framework agreement or a building block approach. It would be open to nuclear armed states outside the NPT, which as part of the process would also commit to the non-proliferation parts of the NPT. We consider this as an interesting idea because this could strengthen the NPT. Another advantage is that this would strengthen the inclusiveness of the disarmament approach. NWS are part of the NPT and will be involved on negotiations concerning the NPT.

We must continue to strive to put in place effective measures, which will foster confidence and facilitate new and deeper reductions in existing arsenals. We must continue our efforts to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. We must continue to strive to get needed legal instruments in place, such as the CTBT as well as commencing on FMT negotiations. We must consolidate existing regional nuclear weapons free zones and explore ways to move forwards on negative security assurances. We must secure all nuclear materials, and in this respect, we welcome the entry into force of the amended CPPNM.

There is no fast track to a world free of nuclear weapons. In the process down to zero, we need the engagement of all states. The nuclear weapons states bear a particular responsibility. The question on introducing a legal framework to secure the achievement and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons is important. At a certain stage, we will need such a framework.

Mr. Chairman,
This OEWG can help clarify where possible bridges can be built between the different pathways to reach nuclear disarmament as called for this morning by the High Representative for Disarmament Mr Kim Won-soo. It can identify and elaborate the different elements, so that we all speak the same language. Your synthesis paper contains some valuable elements to start this discussion. Next to the paper, there have been several working papers and proposals, and I also do not presume to have been exhaustive in my intervention today.

We can also discuss sequencing and timing of certain elements. For us, the guiding criteria in those discussions are: will this particular course of action be effective at this point and under these circumstances? What are its effects on international security and stability? How will it affect the policies of nuclear-armed states? However, as these topics appear more suitable for the discussions of tomorrow, I shall get back to them then.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.