Mr. Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

At the outset, like others, I would like to thank today’s panellists General Cartwright and Mr. Ingram for their thoughtful presentations.

At this stage, I would like to say a few words about the role of nuclear weapons and the central importance of taking decisive steps forward in this area.

Reducing the role of nuclear weapons constitutes
a) a practical measure to reduce risk;
b) an interim step leading to nuclear disarmament; and
c) a measure to reduce the perceived value of nuclear weapons, thus contributing to non-proliferation.

Reducing the role of nuclear weapons has long been considered a central element of our common efforts. It is a commitment that the Nuclear Weapon States as well as the Non-Nuclear Weapon States have entered into.

Final documents of NPT Review Conferences, time and again, have called for further progress in diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. But these commitments have to a large extent not been turned into reality, which is one key reason why this OEWG has received its mandate to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament in the first place, and why we have this effective measures discussion.

Action 1 of the 2010 Action Plan for instance, which says that “all States parties commit to pursue policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons”; is one of the many NPT disarmament commitments that remain unfulfilled.

On the contrary: it seems that certain Nuclear Weapon States (and other States possessing nuclear weapons for that matter) are in the process of increasing nuclear capabilities that will result in increasing roles of these weapons. Likewise, while it is true that some States have taken steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, others seem to
have moved in the opposite direction. It sometimes seems that some States – even Non-nuclear Weapon States - are calling for a stronger role for nuclear weapons. Switzerland is very concerned about this development. In a global and interconnected world, we should work rapidly towards alternative means to generate security, not rely on concepts that are based on mass destruction.

Failure to reduce the role of nuclear weapons does not only have a negative impact on three dimensions I mentioned earlier – risk reduction, disarmament, non-proliferation. It would also be a worrying sign that Nuclear Weapon States – while reducing nuclear weapons quantitatively – are not committed to a fundamental, more profound change of the role of nuclear weapons. This, in turn, would represent a severe challenge for the NPT’s credibility and sustainability. The situation is even more challenging considering the fact that nuclear possessing states outside of the NPT are also in the process of further developing their nuclear arsenals.

There are several practical measures that can be taken to move forward on reducing the role of nuclear weapons. Earlier this week we already discussed a range of effective legal measures for achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons.

One additional legally binding measure to reduce the role of nuclear weapons would be strengthening negative security assurances via new, universal treaty-based obligations. This has been on the agenda for a long time, since the beginning of the negotiations of the NPT. We take note of the paper submitted by Belgium, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. In our view, such assurances are long overdue. They could take the form of a stand-alone instrument, or be part of a Framework Convention. Such assurances would increase the security of those who have given up the nuclear option. It would also change the role of nuclear weapons, because it would remove certain nuclear warfighting scenarios from the table.

Another relevant measure to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, that has long been agreed, is De-alerting. Sweden, on behalf of the De-alerting Group, introduced a working paper with concrete recommendations. We remain deeply concerned that today almost 2,000 warheads remain ready for use within a matter of minutes. Such alert levels multiply the risks posed by nuclear weapons and represent an unacceptable danger to humanity.

Mr. Chair,

We are confident that the de-alerting measures proposed in your synthesis paper are universally supported by the countries participating in the OEWG. We therefore hope
that the report of this OEWG will contain concrete and agreed recommendations in this regard. This will be important in view of taking this issue forward. Because De-alerting is not only an essential risk reduction measure. It is also a disarmament step, as it contributes to the much needed change of the role of nuclear weapons.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Chair,