Mr Chair,

- Making progress in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is of essential importance to peace and security for all of us. We should remind ourselves time and again of our joint goal – a safer and securer world with fewer and ultimately with no nuclear weapons.

- As in other areas of arms control and disarmament our deep concerns about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons are a major driving force behind our determination to eliminate nuclear arms altogether. Nor can the legitimate security concerns of states be brushed aside. Only by addressing both the security as well as humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons can we take the incremental but necessary steps that will enhance security for all and provide the best chance of reaching a world without nuclear weapons.

- As a consequence, when vital national security interests are involved, history has proven that progress in terms of arms control and disarmament was contingent on progress in the political area. Events over the past year and a half led to a harsher security environment and have reminded us that nuclear disarmament does not take place in a vacuum.

- Therefore, political progress towards detente may pave the way for arms control and disarmament, or the other way around. However, they remain dependent on each other.

- Following this logic very significant reductions of the US and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals after the end of the Cold War were possible, although much still has to be done. By comparison with Cold War times, nuclear arsenals have been greatly reduced, by more than 80%. One may regret the slower pace of disarmament in recent times. But it is difficult to deny that dramatic reductions have taken place.

- There are conflicting views with regard to “Global Zero”. It is undisputed, however, that nuclear-weapon free world will be the end of a process, based on already achieved
results in terms of reductions of nuclear weapons, but will require further substantive steps in terms of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and security as well as the solution of certain key regional-conflicts.

- Germany is in favour of concrete and practical “building blocks”, including parallel and simultaneous steps on a multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral or unilateral basis, in order to continue nuclear disarmament and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons. This should be accompanied by practical, effective and confidence-building measures.

- Logically, a comprehensive nuclear convention will most likely be required at the final stage of the process. Negotiating a prohibition, however, at an early stage without taking into account security policy implications would amount to not paying attention to their role in present security and military doctrines. From our perspective, a non-inclusive approach would fail to achieve sufficient participation especially with regards to nuclear weapons states and a considerable number of states for whom nuclear weapons, have to remain part of their security environment for the foreseeable future. Such an approach will, therefore, fail to be “effective”, since it would not offer any operational value added.

- It is from this basic and widely shared assumption that we approach the work of the OEWG.

Thank you, Mr Chair.