Mr Chairman,

Let me first congratulate you on assuming the chairmanship of the Open Ended Working Group and let me assure you of the full support of the Dutch delegation. We stand ready to assist you in any way we can.

Mr Chairman,

We are about to embark on a new adventure in disarmament land with the start of this Open Ended Working Group.

In the view of the Netherlands the added value of this Working Group is that it presents us with an opportunity. An opportunity to reach progress on priority disarmament issues. An opportunity to come up with and discuss ideas – old or new – in order to get closer to the start of multilateral disarmament negotiations. An opportunity to work in a new setting with different procedures and with more countries and civil society taking part.

We have stated many times before in the CD and in other disarmament fora that our main objective is to reach progress on priority disarmament issues by means of starting negotiations, regardless of the forum in which those negotiations would take
place. We sincerely hope the Open Ended Working Group can indeed contribute to reaching that objective.

That is, Mr Chairman, the main reason why we have supported resolution 67/56. And that is also the reason why we stand ready to explore with you and others where this Working Group can take us. We are open to discuss any proposal that can further effective nuclear disarmament.

Mr Chairman,

Let me now turn to substance. The Netherlands fully subscribes to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The NPT is the essential instrument to reach that goal. The discussion on humanitarian consequences in Oslo recently reminded us again about the devastating effects of these weapons and hence the importance of making progress towards that objective. We believe that the best way to make progress towards nuclear disarmament is via a step by step approach and by taking practical and concrete steps. These steps can be of a multilateral, regional, bilateral or unilateral nature.

We do not see the work of the Open Ended Working Group as a distraction from the NPT process. On the contrary, we would like to focus the efforts of the Working Group on ways to further and reinforce the implementation of the NPT Action plan.
As the Working Group is requested to consider ideas on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations we would like to focus on what we consider to be two essential elements on the road towards a nuclear weapons free world, namely a treaty that stops the production of Fissile material for military purposes and a CTBT entered into force.

We therefore hope that the Open Ended Working Group will address the questions regarding how to get to the start of negotiations on an FMCT and the entry into force of the CTBT.

Furthermore the Netherlands together with its partners of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) have made some concrete proposals during last NPT prepcom on practical steps that can be taken to achieve progress on disarmament. They are working papers on the reduced role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines, enhancing transparency and disarmament education. Those kinds of steps can be taken on relatively short term and do not require long and complicated negotiations.

Therefore we would like the Working Group to address the question how to further these practical steps.

Mr Chairman,

To conclude, the Netherlands is looking forward to the opportunity presented by the Open Ended Working Group. We hope we will be able to seize on this opportunity and use the
Working Group to make a serious effort to bring a world without nuclear weapons closer.