Mr President,

I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of the seven members of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC): Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden, your country Egypt, and my own country, South Africa.

We would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament (CD). We are delighted to see one of our members presiding over the work of this body. We are confident that with your sage wisdom, able leadership and diplomatic skills, you will be able to steer us towards finding a solution that could finally end the long-standing stalemate that has prevented this body from fulfilling its mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

Mr President,

As CD members are aware, the NAC is a cross-regional grouping that was established in 1998 to champion the cause of nuclear disarmament. For the last 14 years, the NAC has worked relentlessly towards promoting the full and effective implementation of the nuclear disarmament obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

We have long maintained that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are inextricably linked and that progress on both fronts is therefore required. It was this conviction, given the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament in the aftermath of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference that led to the formation of the Coalition.

The CD is a key vehicle through which nuclear disarmament objectives can be achieved. We therefore share the concern articulated, not only in this chamber, but across the international community that the CD has not been able to
undertake substantive work for the last 14 years. Accordingly, the NAC fully supports the initiative taken and efforts made by your Presidency towards the adoption of a programme of work that could pave the way for the commencement of negotiations. As a Coalition, we believe that such a programme of work should include the establishment of a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament.

Mr President,

The NAC is committed to the fulfilment of the systematic and progressive efforts and actions agreed to at successive NPT Conferences with the aim of constructing a comprehensive framework of mutually reinforcing instruments for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. In this regard, we support the commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices – a treaty that should serve both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives.

We reemphasise that the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and the commitment that they would never be produced again, is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of these weapons. Pending their elimination, the NAC underlines the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in receiving unequivocal and legally binding security assurances from the nuclear-weapon States, which could strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Mr President,

We remain convinced that determined and prompt preparations for the achievement of a nuclear-weapons-free world should not be postponed, for tomorrow may be too late. The NAC believes that it is imperative for all stakeholders to redouble their efforts and take urgent steps to implement their commitments in this regard. The NAC encourages all states to work together to overcome obstacles within the international disarmament machinery, including in the CD, which are inhibiting efforts to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament in a multilateral context.

In conclusion, Mr President, please be assured of the fullest co-operation and support of the members of the NAC in discharging your mandate.

I thank you.