Mr Chairperson, in the interest of time, allow me to make just a few comments on the issues under discussion.

South Africa remains open to discuss efforts aimed at a strengthened NPT Review Process, including elements that will enhance the effectiveness of the treaty in a cost effective manner and that will not duplicate existing efforts, or lead to meetings for the sake of holding meetings. Such elements that garner consensus regarding institutional reforms could therefore be supported.

Mr Chairperson,

The withdrawal provision contained in Article X of the Treaty acknowledges the right of sovereign States to withdraw from the NPT and is not an unusual provision in multilateral treaties. Article X of the NPT clearly provides that a State may withdraw from the Treaty in the exercise of its sovereign right in certain defined circumstances and in accordance with the procedures set out in this article. The question of withdrawal is therefore not an issue that is open to interpretation.

Care should be taken that proposals to interpret Article X do not create ambiguity. Such legal uncertainty is always undesirable and may undermine the Treaty itself. Loose interpretations of the provisions of the Treaty may well create greater uncertainties, or even loopholes, that will not serve the interests of the Treaty. During the previous NPT review cycle, measures have also been proposed to deter States from withdrawing from the Treaty, but no agreement was reached on this matter.

In conclusion, Mr Chairperson, South Africa remains committed to the Treaty as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime, and stands ready to engage in efforts aimed at strengthening the implementation of the Treaty in the balanced manner.

Thank you.