Mr Chairman, Dear Colleagues,

My country fully associates itself with the statement of the European Union and with the statement made on behalf of the five nuclear-weapon States.

1. I should first like to congratulate you on your election to the Chair. Your appointment brings with it a major responsibility, that of launching a new review cycle. I am sure that your experience and personal talents will enable you to conduct your task perfectly. I assure you of the full cooperation and support of my delegation in the performance of your duties.

2. The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, negotiated over 40 years ago, remains more than ever the cornerstone of the international community’s action to respond to the current serious proliferation crises and to questions about nuclear safety and security linked to peaceful uses. The NPT also remains the foundation for disarmament progress.

3. This new cycle starts with two major assets:

- A strong political consensus, expressed by the 189 parties to the treaty at the 2010 Review Conference;
- An ambitious road map, adopted by consensus at the 2010 conference, which clearly marks out the path for us to drive forward this treaty.

Although the States party were unable to come to an agreement in 2005, the final document adopted in 2010 contains a pragmatic, balanced action plan on the three pillars of the Treaty.

Mr Chairman, Dear Colleagues

4. Our first task is to implement this road map.

France is satisfied with and fully supports this road map. We would have liked the elements on proliferation crises to be more incisive, to reflect more closely the reality of these crises. They could also have been more ambitious on the subject of NPT withdrawal and States’ compliance with their international obligations. However, we
know that the text is the result of a delicate compromise. It is in this spirit of compromise that we call on all parties to adhere to this achievement, which enables us to forge ahead to work towards a safer world.

We now need, individually and collectively, to implement in a balanced manner the three pillars of this Action Plan.

5. France will fully discharge its responsibilities with respect to the Action Plan and as a nuclear-weapon State. We are already preparing to report in 2014, as called upon by the Action Plan, on our work on implementing the conclusions and recommendations of the 2010 Final Document.

I am pleased to announce that my country has met today the objective defined by the President of the French Republic in 2008 to reduce our deterrent’s airborne component by one-third, that is to say the missiles and nuclear warheads that make up this component. All in all, in the last 15 years, we have cut the number of nuclear warheads by half and, in a first and for the sake of transparency, announced the ceiling of nuclear warheads in our possession, which now number less than 300. These are France’s recent, concrete actions, which once again go to show our unequivocal commitment to disarmament. I would like to remind you that we are one of the few States to have taken ambitious, irreversible disarmament action in the past 15 years. We have dismantled our ground-to-ground component, our nuclear test site and our facilities for the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

I will come back to this point in more detail when we address the disarmament segment.

6. We have also taken action with the other nuclear-weapon States.

As you know, we invited our partners to the first follow-up meeting to the NPT Review Conference in Paris in July 2011. Following London in September 2009, the P5 met for the second time at this political level to address a much denser, longer agenda, largely covering the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation questions. This vitally important P5 consultation process shows the determination of the nuclear-weapon States to continue to take concrete actions to fully comply with their commitments to the three NPT pillars across the entire review cycle. Rounded out as it is by regular technical consultations on subjects such as nuclear terminology and verification, this process helps improve transparency and confidence within the P5 and with respect to the non-nuclear-weapon States. P5’s unanimous agreement to meet again in Washington in June is commendable as a further demonstration of our shared will to be fully up to the mark in 2015. France intends to actively contribute to this.

7. We have finalised discussions with the ASEAN countries to implement a protocol to the Bangkok Treaty establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia following three rounds of talks in Geneva, New York and Bali. We hope that the protocol can now be signed without delay.

Mr Chairman, Dear Colleagues,
8. This shows that the particular responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States, especially in disarmament, will not be eluded, certainly not by France. Yet the success of the Action Plan, including in disarmament, depends on everyone.

In this respect, we welcome Indonesia's ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and call on all the States that have not yet done so, especially the Annex 2 States, to follow this example.

The appointment of a host country and a facilitator, Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, to hold the 2012 Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is an important step towards the implementation of the 1995 resolution, both for the region's players and for all the countries that set great store by this treaty. We need to continue to work together on the conditions that will enable the planned 2012 conference to be held with all the players concerned and in the most favourable conditions. France fully supported the preparations for the European Union's seminar on this issue, which we attended, and the IAEA forum in November 2011.

We deeply regret that negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty have not yet been able to get underway at the Conference on Disarmament, despite the clear, firm wish expressed by all the States party to the treaty and the laudable efforts made by the successive presidencies. We should look at how best to drive forward this process on the basis of document CD/1864 adopted in 2009.

Mr Chairman, Dear Colleagues,

9. The main challenge to the treaty's integrity in this new review cycle is the continuation and even escalation of the proliferation crises, which cannot remain without a response.

Granted, there are positive elements to be found as regards strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. We have seen further ratifications of the Additional Protocol, a ten-year extension on the 1540 Committee's mandate and the NSG's adoption of new guidelines on transfers of enrichment and reprocessing technologies.

Nevertheless, the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, and especially the IAEA safeguards system, remains a priority. The persistence and possible escalation of the proliferation crises is a subject of immense concern and calls for a firm response from us.

These crises are more than a threat to regional and international security. By sapping mutual confidence, they hinder the development of civil nuclear co-operation and hold up progress with disarmament. And they touch the very substance of the agreement contained in the NPT.

10. The Iranian crisis, first of all. For far too many years now, Iran has been pursuing an enrichment programme without any credible civil purpose, in violation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions and IAEA Board of Governors resolutions. As shown by the latest IAEA reports, the situation is continuing to worsen on the ground: acceleration of enrichment activities, in particular, to 20% on
the Fordo site long concealed from the international community, continuation of heavy water activities, and no progress with clarifying unanswered issues about the possible military dimensions set out in the annex to the IAEA's November 2011 report.

The Group of Six met in Istanbul on 14 April to resume discussions with Iran about its nuclear programme. The Six again presented a united front in their determination to hold serious talks with Iran to secure answers from the country to the international community's concerns over the nature of its programme and full compliance with its international obligations. The principle of a further meeting was agreed upon. The coming discussions will be important: Iran must urgently make tangible moves to establish confidence, in keeping with the resolutions on this country adopted by the UN Security Council and the IAEA Board of Governors.

11. Turning to the North Korean crisis, the situation continues to be extremely worrying. The two nuclear tests that North Korea claimed to have conducted have been condemned by the international community. The November 2010 revelations of the existence of a uranium enrichment facility, in blatant violation of resolutions 1718 and 1874, have merely added to our concerns over the North Korean nuclear programme. The launch on 13 April this year, which we firmly condemn, constitutes a further North Korean violation of its international obligations, by virtue of which it should refrain from any activity associated with a ballistic missile programme. It is time for this country to get back on track to dialogue and full legality by completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantling its nuclear programme, as demanded by United Nations Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874. It should, without delay, allow the IAEA inspectors back into the country, giving them access to all its nuclear facilities, cease all proliferation activity and again refrain from making any move that could further add to tension in the region.

12. Lastly, regarding Syria, and in line with the resolution adopted by the Board of Governors in June 2011 on the basis of the IAEA report, we urge Damas to fully cooperate with the Agency and shed full light on its past and present nuclear activities.

13. I will reiterate here the importance that France attaches to the question of withdrawal. My country naturally fully adheres to this right established by Article X of the NPT. Yet we need to limit abuses of this right. France would like to pursue discussions on the consequences of withdrawal and on the principles designed to organise the international community's response in the event of a notification of withdrawal. It is vital, in particular, for a State to remain fully responsible for NPT violations committed before its withdrawal.

14. On the subject of peaceful uses of civil nuclear energy, my country chose and confirms its choice of nuclear energy so as not to forego this energy's capacities to address the challenges of climate change, growing energy needs and medical research, in particular. France is prepared to help all its partners who seek to embark on the responsible development of civil nuclear energy, provided they scrupulously comply with their international non-proliferation obligations. This implies from them a commitment to safety and security, as stressed by the President of the French Republic at the International Conference on Access to Civil Nuclear Energy held in Paris in March 2010. Training is key to transmitting both these skills and a real culture in that field. This is why we set up the International Institute of Nuclear
Energy (I2EN) in 2011, in association with nuclear safety and security education and training players, to spread the best education possible in this area.

15. The Fukushima events, caused by an extraordinary natural disaster, reminded us of the importance of promoting and using, as we have always advocated, the highest safety standards and the need to further scale up international co-operation. France naturally supports the IAEA action plan adopted by the 55th General Conference in June 2011 to strengthen nuclear safety worldwide and actively contributes to its implementation. In preparation for this important step, France held in Paris an international ministerial seminar on safety with 33 States in June 2011 in close cooperation with the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency. We also champion the creation of an international rapid response mechanism under the auspices of the IAEA to pool resources and expertise available at the national level and quickly mobilize them in the event of a nuclear accident. The networking of national training centres for crisis management, under the supervision of the IAEA, in order to exchange best national practices, is also the means to prepare efficiently for managing nuclear accidents.

16. A great deal of progress has been made with nuclear security, before and after the Seoul Summit. In line with the commitments announced at the Washington Summit, France has overhauled and strengthened its legislative and regulatory mechanism to effectively combat theft, misuse and any malicious use of nuclear material and facilities. We have also striven to lead by example by requesting the IAEA to conduct an IPPAS (International Physical Protection Advisory Service) mission last year to assess the French nuclear physical protection system and its implementation in one of our nuclear plants. The final report rates the French nuclear security regime as robust. We are pursuing work with the IAEA on identifying all disused radioactive sources of French origin around the world and securing those with potentially serious radiological repercussions in the event of an accident or malicious act. Last but not least, we are conducting a responsible highly enriched uranium minimisation policy. This policy duly factors in prevailing technical and economic feasibility conditions, and is designed to preserve the fundamental interests of research and prevent the risks of global shortages in the crucial supply of medical radioisotopes.

For France, safety, security and non-proliferation are the three conditions of the responsible development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

17. To conclude, France will see this first Preparatory Committee as successful if we manage to hold honest, sincere discussions on these subjects. We hope very much that the discussions on procedural issues would be completed quickly, through aligning them with the procedures used for the last cycle. You can count on my support and my delegation’s support to help you in your task.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.