Mr. Chairman,

1. May I congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, and assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation in what we hope will be a constructive and substantive two weeks.

2. While we make this statement in a national capacity, Ireland is also, of course, party to the statements delivered by the European Union, by South Africa on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition and by Australia on behalf of the Vienna Group of 10. We fully endorse each of these statements and associate ourselves with them.

3. It is significant that once again the NPT review cycle begins here in Vienna, the seat of key international organisations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation – the IAEA and the CTBTO. I would like to take this opportunity to stress my country’s firm commitment to supporting the work of these important organisations.

Mr. Chairman,

4. As we enter the 2015 NPT Review Cycle, our starting point must inevitably be the follow-on actions we agreed to in 2010. The outcome of the last Review conference was a forward-looking action plan across all three pillars of the Treaty and on the Middle East resolution. Together, these outcomes provide us with a solid basis for our work in the 2015 review cycle. This first Preparatory Committee gives us a useful opportunity to assess progress to date on implementing the 2010 follow on actions, to take an initial strategic look at where we want the NPT to be in 2015, and to begin to work out how we will get there over the next three years. Along the way, we must consider how to build on this work in 2015.
5. We enter this review cycle in a stronger position than we entered the 2010 review cycle following the failure of the 2005 Review Conference. My delegation believes it is very important that we carry forward and build on the positive momentum of the successful 2010 Review Conference with an ambitious agenda for the 2015 cycle.

6. Ireland is proud of the role we have played, for over five decades, in urging the international community to tackle the issue of nuclear weapons, the most terrifying of threats to humanity. In this, we have had a long and very close association with this Treaty.

7. As we enter this review cycle, allow me to set out some of my delegation’s priorities. Since 1968, when we were honoured to be invited to become the first State to sign the NPT, successive Irish governments have committed themselves to achieving progress across all three pillars of the Treaty. While it is of course critical that this progress be continued across all pillars, it is also the case that more has been achieved to-date on the non-proliferation objectives of the Treaty than on the nuclear disarmament pillar. Together with our partners in the New Agenda Coalition we have constantly called for the prioritisation of nuclear disarmament. We believe that the 13 practical steps of the concluding document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference remain as valid now as they were in 2000. These steps remain the benchmark for progress throughout successive NPT review cycles.

8. In terms of establishing the foundations for success in 2015, we would therefore look to the nuclear-weapon States to continue to build confidence that they are implementing their undertakings to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, to which all States Parties are committed under Article VI, applying the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and enhanced transparency as they proceed. We believe that progress towards complete disarmament will, inevitably, strengthen in turn the NPT’s non-proliferation objectives and we look forward to progress reports from the nuclear weapons states along the way.

9. Of the practical steps agreed in 2000, allow me to mention the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which we see as an essential pillar in the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework established by the NPT. We call on all States which have not yet done so, but particularly those Annex 2 States whose ratification is required to achieve entry into force, to sign and ratify the CTBT immediately and without conditions. It remains a matter of deep concern for us that, more than 15 years after this vital treaty’s opening for signature, it has yet to enter into force.

10. By the same token, we believe that a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile materials would further extend international controls over all such materials, reducing the prospects that they would be used in nuclear weapons. It is a matter of profound regret that despite recent
attempts to reach consensus, the Conference on Disarmament has not yet found a way to agree a programme of work which would include within its agenda the negotiation of a Fissile Material Treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

11. The NPT represents a strong international consensus against nuclear weapons. It also provides the essential basis for mutual confidence in the international development of exclusively peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It is important as ever, therefore, that we achieve full universality and we call again on those three states which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty.

Mr. Chairman,

12. There will inevitably be significant interest in progress to date on implementation of the 1995 Middle East resolution, particularly following the agreement reached in 2010 on how to take this process forward. Ireland is very pleased to have been able to play a role in brokering the 2010 agreement on a text which emphasises the importance of a process leading to full implementation of the 1995 resolution and which sets out a number of practical steps in this regard, including the convening of a conference in 2012. We fully support Finnish Under-Secretary of State Jaakko Laajava in his task as facilitator of the 2012 conference and we look forward to his progress report. We believe that there is now a fair measure of understanding of what is required to achieve a Weapons of Mass Destruction-free zone in the Middle East. Despite the non-universality of the Treaty, we believe the 1995 Resolution contains most of the fundamental elements. What we need now are political will and political leadership, both inside and outside the region, to take the process forward.

Mr. Chairman,

13. My delegation believes it is very important that we take full advantage of the forward momentum achieved at the 2010 Review Conference. We believe that the 2015 review cycle must develop a new package of ambitious agreements, supported by concrete and measurable benchmarks. I can assure you that Ireland will engage with all States Parties throughout the 2015 cycle to ensure that we do not miss the opportunity to build on the success of 2010.

Thank you.