Chairperson,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of this Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). I wish to assure you of my delegation’s full support and cooperation in executing your mandate towards a successful conclusion of our deliberations.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the New Agenda Coalition.

South Africa shares the deep concern expressed by the vast majority of States Parties to the NPT about the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Along with many others, we remain convinced that nuclear weapons do not guarantee security, but rather detract from it. As long as these weapons exist, and vertical and horizontal proliferation persists, humanity will continue to face the threat of catastrophe and mass annihilation. The continued retention of nuclear weapons also serves as a catalyst for further proliferation, as illustrated by the recent deplorable nuclear weapons test conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The NPT represents a historical bargain between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States, in terms of which the former has undertaken to eliminate their nuclear weapons based on the reciprocal undertaking by the latter not to pursue the nuclear weapons option. As such, the Treaty remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Chairperson,

The Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference contained an extensive Action Plan under all three Treaty pillars which, in a very concrete way illustrated the continued commitment of States Parties to the NPT as the foundation of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The reaffirmation of the continued validity of the outcomes of 1995 and 2000, particularly the unequivocal commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and the agreement to apply the principles of transparency, irreversibility and verifiability in fulfilment of Treaty obligations, provided renewed hope towards the achievement of the NPT’s overall objectives.

However, agreement on the 2010 Final Document was by no means a recognition that States Parties were satisfied with the progress made in the implementation of past
agreements or that confidence among States Parties had been restored. In fact, most States Parties remain seriously concerned about the lack of urgency and seriousness with which these solemn undertakings, particularly in respect of nuclear disarmament, continue to be approached. For this reason, South Africa believes that the success of 2010 will be determined by the extent to which these undertakings are implemented. We are likewise concerned that some Parties may endeavour to reinterpret what had been agreed to during previous Review Conferences, which would seriously undermine the NPT regime.

Chairperson,

We regret that, beyond modest gains in reducing the number of strategically deployed nuclear weapons in the context of the New START agreement, not much concrete progress has been achieved in the area of nuclear disarmament since 2010. Reductions are indeed vital to removing the excessive destructive capabilities developed during the Cold War, but do not substitute for concrete, transparent, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament measures.

The development of new categories of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems provide a clear indication that some continue to harbour aspirations for the indefinite retention of these instruments of destruction, contrary to their legal obligations and political commitments.

South Africa shares the NAC position that the continued reliance on nuclear weapons has led to increased insecurity among NNWS and we therefore regard the provision of effective, legally binding security assurances as a key element of the NPT. The provision of such assurances is not some ultimate objective in and of itself, but is a pragmatic, interim and practical measure aimed at strengthening the non-proliferation regime and contributing to the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

While deeply concerned about the continuing stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, South Africa remains committed to the earliest resumption of substantive work, including on the issues addressed in the 2010 Action Plan pertaining to nuclear disarmament. We welcome the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group of the UN General Assembly that would consider proposals to take multilateral disarmament negotiations forward, as well as the High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament to be convened during September this year. We hope that these initiatives will provide the necessary impetus to give effect to the expectations of the international community.

Chairperson,

South Africa believes that the strengthened safeguards system remains an essential element of our collective efforts to address the threat posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Such strengthened safeguards would contribute to establishing confidence in the peaceful application of nuclear energy which, in turn, would greatly facilitate the transfer of nuclear technology and use of nuclear energy to the benefit of developing countries.
South Africa therefore maintains its principled position on the obligation of States Parties to conclude safeguards agreements as required under the Treaty. While the Additional Protocol does not emanate from the Treaty, South Africa nonetheless regards it as an indispensable instrument to enable the IAEA to provide credible assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities.

My delegation is therefore encouraged by the progress that has been made since 2010 in terms of the number of States that have now concluded Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols. We also encourage further progress in the fulfilment of the 2010 Action Plan pertaining to non-proliferation.

Chairperson,

South Africa supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in parts of the world where they do not yet exist, including in the Middle East. We share the conviction that the establishment of such zones, including the Pelindaba Treaty, enhances global and regional peace and security, strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes towards realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

South Africa views the 1995 resolution on the Middle East as part of the package of decisions that enabled the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 and we therefore urge all States to redouble their efforts to ensure a gathering on this important issue involving all States of the region at the earliest possible date.

Chairperson,

The South African Government strongly condemns the latest nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Since the announcement by the DPRK in February 2005 that it had developed a nuclear weapon deterrent capability, South Africa has consistently called on the DPRK to verifiably dismantle any nuclear weapons, to return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) without delay, to place all its facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) verification, and to contribute through strengthened confidence-building measures to global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

South Africa also continues to encourage the peaceful resolution of the dispute surrounding Iran's nuclear programme through negotiations and co-operation aimed at promoting confidence in the Iranian nuclear programme while facilitating the IAEA's work on the programme. South Africa strongly rejects any threats of military intervention. We have taken note of the continued efforts between Iran and the Agency to reach agreement on the structured approach, and encourage every effort to resolve the remaining differences. Whilst it is clear that the two sides cannot afford an indefinite dialogue on this matter, South Africa believes that reasonable requests should be heeded with pragmatism and creativity. South Africa welcomes the ongoing negotiations between the EU3+3 and Iran and urges the participants to negotiate in
good faith towards sustainable solutions in line with the provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Chairperson,

Global security of energy supply has become one of the key focus areas worldwide with many countries, including in Africa, looking towards nuclear energy as part of their energy mix to address the challenge of increasing energy demands. In our National Development Plan, South Africa is working towards an energy sector that promotes economic growth and development through energy infrastructure investment, advances social equity through expanded access to affordable energy services and underpins environmental sustainability by reducing pollution and mitigating the effects of climate change.

South Africa’s approach to nuclear energy is premised on the fact that peaceful nuclear co-operation and access to the benefits of nuclear energy, pursuant to Article IV of the NPT, are integral components of the Treaty. The peaceful use of nuclear technology is an inalienable right recognized in the Treaty and is of particular relevance and importance to Africa, given the need for adequate energy supplies to fuel sustainable and accelerated economic growth on our Continent.

As President Zuma stated at the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit, “nuclear energy provides not only for the expanded opportunity to generate power needed for our development. We also derive infinite value from its application to health, nutrition and agriculture. Our international legally binding obligations on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation allow for the enrichment of uranium for peaceful purposes.”

South Africa recognizes the growing role that the IAEA will have to play in the future. Many of the IAEA’s TC projects are of strategic importance to developing countries, particularly in Africa, and contribute to the achievement of the MDGs, the alleviation of poverty and the realisation of the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

Chairperson,

South Africa supports the full implementation of the NPT and its universality in pursuit of the goal of achieving a world entirely free from nuclear weapons. The strength, credibility and vitality of the NPT rest on a fundamental bargain across its three pillars, which must be recognized and upheld.

Thank you.