Mr. Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Belgium shares the vision of a world without nuclear weapons. This is a long term vision that can become reality only if all nuclear weapon states commit themselves to a process of concrete, irreversible and verifiable policy changes and reductions and if the Non-Proliferation Treaty is truly universal and fully respected. Disarmament and non-proliferation go hand in hand and progress in both areas must contribute to international peace and security. For this reason, we should not limit ourselves to pious wishes or get distracted by lofty declarations. What is needed is a thorough and constant reality check. What is happening on the ground? What is the full picture, including the root causes of conflict and lack of trust? What is each party’s level of responsibility? This conference offers an ideal opportunity to address these questions and to evaluate the implementation of our 2010 NPT action plan.

Mr. Chairman,

Belgium calls once more on India, Israel and Pakistan to join the NPT as non nuclear weapon states. We recognize that such decision requires considerable political courage and cannot be dissociated from the regional context. Our role should be supportive and constructive. We should not miss an opportunity to engage with these countries in a way that is compatible with our own NPT allegiance. We should make the best out of our relationships with them in areas such as nuclear security, export control, IAEA verification and safe and responsible nuclear management. But we should also invest in promoting regional stability and broader confidence building. The convening of a conference on the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, to be attended by all States of the
region, would have a tremendous bridge building function. We call on all parties concerned to show flexibility and trust in the Facilitator.

We will not achieve universality of the NPT if we ourselves create doubts about its centrality and relevance. The treaty is as much a set of balanced norms and commitments as it is a process of questions and answers aimed at raising the level of implementation in the context of ever changing realities. Any scenario of a State intent to leave the NPT would be a system failure, as the case of the DPRK illustrates. We see merit in clarifying the rules concerning withdrawal and welcome the useful papers that have been circulated.

Mr. Chairman,

Action 1 of our 2010 Review Conference conclusions commits all States parties to pursue policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. Belgium welcomes the continued progress made in the implementation of the new START treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation. We salute President Obama’s recent call to further deepen these reductions and to include in the negotiating process all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, strategic and non-strategic. This corresponds to the position my country has promoted consistently and we will support it in every possible way in the fora to which we belong. As a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Belgium participated actively in the elaboration of the new strategic concept and the defense and deterrence posture review. We have managed to further reduce the role and numbers of nuclear weapons in NATO’s defense, confirmed the de-targeting and de-alerting status of the few remaining nuclear components, created an opening for effective negative security assurances and nuclear weapon free zones and promoted increased transparency and nuclear confidence building measures. The newly created NATO Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Committee is now working on this basis and will facilitate the translation of policy principles into concrete actions. The NATO-Russia Council provides another opportunity to register progress. My country will be actively promoting increased transparency, accountability and confidence building measures, such as mutual visits and joint doctrine analysis. Inspired by the transparency regarding nuclear holdings already shown by some, we encourage all nuclear weapon states to fully report to the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee, in accordance with Actions 5 and 21 of the NPT Action Plan. Belgium is convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons cannot forego the requirements of transparency, accountability, verifiability and irreversibility. Moreover, our vision of a nuclear weapon free world is based on the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the conclusion of a Treaty banning the production of new Fissile Material. We call on all States concerned to commit themselves to ratification of the CTBT, to the commencement of FMCT negotiations and to the reactivation of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

The essential role of the IAEA in providing the international community with credible guarantees about the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear programs is widely supported. Full scope safeguards agreements in combination with an additional protocol
constitute the current verification standard. We call on all States to live up to this standard. This is all the more so for countries whose nuclear activities give rise to serious concern. These countries have everything to gain from full transparency and cooperation with the IAEA.

We urge Iran to uphold its commitments under the UN Charter and the NPT and to respond positively and without further delay to the IAEA requests. Iran’s past and present nuclear activities, as documented by the IAEA, raise serious concern in the wide international community and stand in the way of normal and constructive relations, as illustrated by the far reaching sanctions in place. We expect Iran to dispel the mistrust it has created by engaging in clandestine and dubious activities. Restoring confidence is at the heart of the diplomatic process carried out on our behalf by the EU High Representative and we urge Iran to respond seriously and timely to the offer put on the table by the E3+3.

The DPRK has moved one step further in defying the international community. We strongly condemn the nuclear test carried out by the DPRK last February and the provocative and aggressive rhetoric. Nuclear blackmail cannot be tolerated. The DPRK leadership knows what is has to do if it really wants to sync in with the 21st century and give to its people the dignity and prosperity all human beings deserve. What is required, is full compliance with the NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations, UN Security Council resolutions and commitments made in the Six Party Talks.

Mr. Chairman,

Peaceful use of the atom is a matter of interest to all of us, regardless of the national decisions taken by some regarding nuclear energy. Safety and security are challenges that will not wither away. Following the Fukushima Daichi accident, we have gone through extensive nuclear stress tests and we are fully engaged in translating the results in concrete safety actions. Last January, Belgium deposited with the IAEA its ratification instrument regarding the Amended Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. In the context of our participation in the Nuclear Security Summit, we have committed ourselves to the conversion of High Enriched Uranium to Low Enriched Uranium, when technically and economically feasible. This complex process is well underway, while we continue at the same time to guarantee the production of medical radioisotopes, an essential contribution to human healthcare worldwide. Our nuclear research centre SCK continues to develop the innovative reactor project MYRRHA, which combines benefits in terms of security, non proliferation and nuclear waste management. Our research centre also remains an active provider of training services to the IAEA Technical Cooperation Program. In these times of severe budget constraints, Belgium maintains the payment in full of all its contributions to the IAEA.

Mr. Chairman,

Belgium repeatedly expressed deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and reaffirmed the need for all States at all
times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law, while convinced that every effort should be made to avoid nuclear war and nuclear terrorism. Belgium promotes, in cooperation with civil society, disarmament and non-proliferation education which, inter alia, contributes to raising public awareness of the tragic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. This brings us back to the need to underscore the centrality of the NPT, which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty and an important element in the further development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. The three reinforcing pillars of the NPT constitute a unique, balanced and irreplaceable framework to avoid nuclear catastrophe. We must uphold the NPT and not get distracted from it. Under your able leadership, Mr. Chairman, we will be able to accomplish this mission. Belgium fully associates itself with the statement made by the European Union. We look forward to interactive discussions and a successful outcome of this Preparatory Committee.

Thank you for your attention.