Mr. Chairman,

I congratulate you on your election as Chair and assure you of Ireland’s full support and cooperation in what we hope will be a productive two weeks.

Ireland associates itself fully with the statements delivered by the European Union, by Brazil on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, by Australia on behalf of the Vienna Group of 10 and with the joint statement on the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament.

We are now half way through the preparatory process leading to the 2015 Review Conference. At the 2010 Review Conference, we agreed an ambitious and forward-looking set of conclusions and recommendations for action across all three of the Treaty’s pillars and on the Middle East. Last year’s PrepCom got this cycle off to a smooth start. It is important that we now move quickly to substantive matters. We have a lot of work to do. With calm and constructive discussions at this PrepCom and next year in New York, we can achieve an ambitious outcome at the 2015 Review Conference. The process of mapping out how to achieve this must begin now.

Unfortunately, we remain some distance from achieving full implementation of the NPT. If we are to be faithful to our obligations under the Treaty, we must do more to achieve progress across all three pillars, in a genuinely balanced way. The 2010 Action Plan offers a basis for doing just that. It is important, therefore, that we monitor carefully progress under its different headings if we are to implement the Action Plan by 2015, as agreed.

Our record at implementing what we agree is mixed. In particular, progress on implementing disarmament obligations under the NPT remains disappointing. The original bargain was that the nuclear weapons states would disarm their arsenals, in return for which the non nuclear weapons states would not acquire these weapons. For the majority here in this room, who have kept their side of this bargain, it is frustrating that the other side of the bargain has not yet been met.

The wider UN community’s sense of frustration at the slow pace of disarmament is clear. We see this in the decision of the General Assembly last year to create – by overwhelming majority votes – two new mechanisms to take forward discussions on issues which the Conference on Disarmament has been unable or unwilling to take forward over many years.
We see it, also, in the General Assembly’s decision to convene a High Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament later this year. And we see it in the groundswell of support for a meaningful discussion around the humanitarian impact of a nuclear detonation, whether this is caused by accident, miscalculation or design.

Ireland welcomes the constructive meeting held in Oslo in March, and looks forward to the follow-on Conference later this year in Mexico. The clear message which emerged from Oslo is that humanity would be powerless to respond to the uniquely destructive power which a nuclear detonation would unleash. We encourage the nuclear weapons states to engage in this process. Their absence from Oslo was, perhaps, a missed opportunity and we hope they will be present in Mexico.

Mr. Chairman,

As we look to 2015, transparency will be a key element for a successful Review Conference. Forty three years after entry into force, the wider NPT membership is not able to speak with precision about the number of weapons in existence. It is equally unacceptable for any State Party to maintain a policy of opacity about the size of its arsenal. We call upon the nuclear weapons states to move quickly to agree upon and use a standard reporting form, to demonstrate maximum transparency.

Next year’s reporting from the nuclear weapons states on the implementation of their commitment to accelerate progress towards nuclear disarmament will be crucial. We encourage them to achieve greater transparency, going beyond the steps already taken thereby building confidence in their commitment to disarm.

We call on the nuclear weapons states to show leadership by making deep reductions in their weapons arsenals. This would be a clear demonstration of their commitment to the unequivocal undertaking they gave at the 2000 Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, as required by Article VI. Pending these reductions, which should of course be verifiable and irreversible, we call on the nuclear weapons states to downgrade the role of nuclear weapons in their security postures. This would represent a strong confidence-building measure – both among the five and for the rest of the world. Reducing alert levels is an important element of this. Current alert levels are excessive, increasing the risk of unintended deployment – whether by accident or miscalculation, or because of lack of information. We must ask ourselves is it really necessary to maintain these weapons on high alert.

Mr Chairman,

The DPRK represents the most serious nuclear proliferation challenge facing us today and we condemn and deplore the recent weapons and missile testing by Pyongyang. We call upon the DPRK to desist from any further provocative actions and to return to full compliance with its obligations under the NPT and its IAEA safeguards agreement. It is essential that the international community remains unified and resolute in its opposition to nuclear weapons proliferation. We must continue to urge the DPRK to re-engage in talks on the de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, immediately and without pre-conditions.
Regrettably, there is a familiar ring to the language of deterrence with which the DPRK attempts to justify its efforts to develop nuclear weapons. Progress on disarmament would remove any possible perceived incentive for a State to respond to a nuclear weapons capability by developing its own retaliatory capability. Disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing pillars of the NPT. The nuclear weapons states have a special responsibility to take action. We encourage them to show leadership by moving quickly to make meaningful reductions in their arsenals, through a process of bilateral and multilateral negotiations. We fear that failure to do so will place the NPT’s non-proliferation objectives under intolerable pressure, something none of us can afford.

The DPRK’s actions also highlight the urgent need for entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We call on the remaining Annex 2 states whose ratification is needed to achieve this to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay. Here again, we ask States to show leadership. Do not wait for others to ratify.

While the CTBT has not yet entered into force, it represents an overwhelming international consensus against nuclear weapons testing that each of us has a duty to protect. We expect all nations – including the DPRK – to respect this international consensus.

Mr Chairman,

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I would like to refer to ongoing efforts to achieve a zone free of nuclear weapons, as well as of other weapons of mass destruction, in the Middle East. Ireland remains strongly supportive of this process. We regret that it was not possible to convene the proposed Conference on a zone within 2012, as intended. Agreement that this should happen was a key outcome of the 2010 Review Conference and it is important that we make good on that agreement. Progress towards full implementation of the 1995 Middle East Resolution – which remains an essential element of the basis on which the Treaty was extended – is long overdue and the agreement of 2010 offered a series of practical steps in the right direction.

We thank the Conference Facilitator for his tireless efforts to create the conditions for a successful Conference, and we commend the seriousness with which States of the region have approached this endeavour. While we understand and share disappointment at the delay, we believe it is more important for all States of the region to stay the course and to continue to engage constructively, with the Facilitator and among themselves, so that the Conference can be convened at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Chairman,

The NPT offers us a blueprint for a world free of nuclear weapons. It is time that we started work on the foundations, be it a single, universal and multilaterally-negotiated instrument or a framework of mutually reinforcing instruments. It is vital that the entire NPT membership continues to work on delivering the Treaty’s non-proliferation agenda. It is equally important that the nuclear weapons states acknowledge that only they can deliver on its disarmament agenda. We look to them to show us they are serious about doing so, beginning with this meeting.

Thank you.