Mr. Chairman,

I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of the chairmanship of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Slovakia wishes you all the success in your endeavours in steering this body. My delegation is looking forward to your leadership and I would like to assure you of Slovakia’s support.

Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement, which was delivered on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. Chairman,

We have gathered here to find a way forward and to get the NPT review process back on track. It is our shared responsibility that NPT regime will be strengthened and not weakened.

We believe that we need to reaffirm the centrality of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and disarmament. It represents a unique and irreplaceable framework for maintaining and strengthening international peace and security.

Slovakia considers all three NPT pillars equally important and mutually reinforcing. We call on all State Parties to implement all the obligations and commitments assumed under the NPT or undertaken during previous Review
Conferences. We need to promote universalisation of the NPT. We call upon States, which have not yet done so, to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States.

Nuclear disarmament is a fundamental pillar of the Treaty. We all share a common vision of a world without nuclear weapons. The only way to achieve complete elimination of nuclear weapons is through effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. Slovakia supports the progressive “building blocks” approach.

We believe that we should work towards a set of mutually reinforcing and legally binding instruments and the prevailing international security environment must be taken into account. Only by addressing both, the security and humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons, we can take the incremental but necessary steps that will enhance security for all and provide the best chance of reaching a world without nuclear weapons.

We need to generate a momentum to continue the forward course in disarmament and implement the consensus 2010 NPT Action Plan and the 13 practical steps to disarmament agreed at 2000 NPT Review conference.

The revitalization of the Conference on Disarmament and its negotiating role is of vital importance to treaty-based nuclear disarmament and arms control. It is necessary to overcome the longstanding deadlock of the Conference and Slovakia, during its forthcoming Presidency in the Conference, will contribute to this effort.

Slovakia continues to support immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices (FMCT). We share the views that such a treaty would offer a unique opportunity to create a non-discriminatory regime with equal obligations nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the FMCT High Level Expert Preparatory Group based on UN General Assembly resolution 71/259.

Slovakia supports further development of the multilateral nuclear verification capabilities necessary for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. In this regard we welcome the adoption of UN 2016 General Assembly resolution on Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

Slovakia recognizes the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a crucial element of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. We call on all States that have not ratified the CTBT, especially the remaining Annex II countries, which bear special responsibility for the entry into force of the Treaty, to do so without delay. Slovakia has actively been contributing to the building of the
CTBTO capacities, including its verification regime. We believe that the Agreement between Slovakia and the CTBTO Preparatory Commission on mutual cooperation related to On-Site Inspections, which was ratified last year, will provide additional driving force in support of the Treaty. We stand ready to deepen our existing cooperation with the CTBTO Preparatory Commission.

Mr. Chairman,

The proliferation of nuclear weapons still remains the challenge for the international community and is a threat to international peace and security.

Since the last Review Conference, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has carried out nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches. They are flagrant violations of multiple UN Security Council resolutions. We categorically reject and condemn such irresponsible and provocative acts as they constitute a serious threat to regional stability and international peace and security. We call upon North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapon and missile programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) demonstrates the possibility of peaceful and diplomatic solutions to the proliferation challenges. Slovakia welcomes progress made so far in its implementation, and underlines the need to continue ensuring full and effective implementation throughout the entire lifetime of the deal. The early ratification by Iran of the Additional Protocol is also essential.

We reaffirm our full support for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. We regret that it has not been possible so far to convene a Conference on the establishment of such a zone. We think, the building of trust and confidence among all stakeholders is the only sustainable way to agree arrangements for a meaningful conference, to be attended by all States of the Middle East on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system has the pivotal role in the implementation of the NPT non-proliferation obligations. Slovakia provides full and continuous support to the IAEA in order to ensure that the Agency is able to meet its safeguards responsibilities. We stress the obligation of states to cooperate with the IAEA in order to facilitate the implementation of safeguards agreements. We share the view that the IAEA full-scope safeguards and the Additional Protocol constitute the current verification standard. We call on all State Parties that have not yet done so to sign and ratify both the Comprehensive
Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol.

Mr. Chairman,

Slovakia fully supports peaceful use of nuclear energy. The NPT provides a solid framework for promoting confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Slovakia supports both the IAEA, and IAEA Member States in fulfilling this endeavour.

We underscore that, in accordance with Article IV of the NPT, each country is free to decide whether or not to include nuclear power as part of its own energy mix. Nuclear power remains an important option for achieving energy security and reaching sustainable development goals for many countries requiring a stable and safe source of energy.

Nuclear safety is one of the key preconditions for the use of nuclear energy. Supporting the safety-related activities by establishing safety standards and making its expert services available to the Member States, is an indispensable role of the Agency. Slovakia supports the Agency's efforts in assisting the Member States in the application of Safety Standards, and promoting adherence to the relevant international conventions.

All EU nuclear power plants, including in Slovakia, carried out risk and safety assessments (so called stress tests) in order to re-assess their overall safety and robustness against extreme natural events. The results confirmed that EU Member States were complying with high standards of nuclear safety.

We also fully appreciate the Agency's role in promoting responsible development of peaceful applications of nuclear technology in all areas, for example in human health, food and agriculture, nuclear and radiation safety, and nuclear energy.

The development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes must be realized hand in hand with the high security standards as well. Slovakia is concerned by the risk that terrorists may acquire, traffic or use nuclear or other radioactive materials. While recognising that nuclear security remains the responsibility of States, international cooperation contributes to strengthening nuclear security. Slovakia considers the entry into force of the Amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material as an essential step in the right direction. Nuclear facilities and nuclear materials in Slovakia are subject to stringent security regulations. We have also made significant effort to protect the nuclear facilities against terrorism and sabotage. Among others, these measures include training programs for security staff, robust physical protection and intruder surveillance and detection systems.
Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, let me express hope that this Preparatory Committee which marks the beginning of the new review cycle will succeed in strengthening the NPT regime. Slovakia is committed to this aim and stands ready to cooperate with other delegations in achieving it.

Thank you for your attention.