Chair,

I am grateful for this opportunity to take the floor on behalf of the Vienna Group of ten comprising Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

In keeping with a practice dating back 37 years to 1980, the Vienna Group of Ten has again convened ahead of this PrepCom to give consideration to opportunities for further advancement of the NPT’s “Vienna issues”. We consider these issues to include the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; nuclear safety, security and safeguards; export controls; nuclear testing and withdrawal from the NPT.

While the VG10 represents a diverse cross-section of perspectives and experiences on nuclear matters, we agree wholeheartedly on a suite of key issues pertinent to this PrepCom and which we hope can be advanced in the days ahead.

The Group’s like-minded views are set out in a series of recommendations in our working paper. These are supplemented by more detailed analysis in seven attached background notes which cover the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty; compliance and verification issues; export control matters; peaceful uses of nuclear energy; nuclear safety; nuclear security; and withdrawal from the NPT.

All recommendations have at their core the objective of strengthening the NPT.

This is because, the Group believes the NPT to be the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and that it is central to international peace, stability and security. The Group is committed to the NPT’s universalisation and recognises that all three pillars of the NPT are of equal importance and are mutually reinforcing. For these reasons, the Group calls on all states, including those outside the NPT to redouble efforts towards achieving the fundamental goals of the Treaty, including achievement of full and irreversible disarmament.

The Group considers the NPT to be central to fostering international confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Peaceful applications of nuclear technology play an important role in the advancement of human health, water management, agriculture, food safety and nutrition, energy and environmental protection. Nuclear applications can play an active
role in realising the Sustainable Development Goals. When developing nuclear energy, including nuclear power, it remains important to ensure the use of nuclear energy is accompanied by commitments to and ongoing implementation of safeguards as well as the highest levels of safety and security.

Chair.

While the Group recognises well-known challenges to the NPT regime including limited progress on the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments and non-compliances cases, our paper also recalls and highlights those developments that are relevant to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and which strengthen the NPT. Important examples of recent progress in this regard include: advancement of the 64 point Action Plan from the 2010 Review Conference; the multilateral work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification; the establishment of the high-level Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty expert preparatory group; and the adoption of the resolution on nuclear disarmament verification at the 71st session of the UNGA, which supports the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts to consider the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament.

In addition, the ever increasing demands for the IAEA’s work and services from member states underscores the enduring relevance and importance of the NPT regime.

Chair.

The Vienna Group of Ten urges all participants to engage in this PrepCom in a spirit of cooperation to ensure we make headway toward our collective interest of global peace and security through non-proliferation and disarmament. We furthermore hope that progress made at this meeting can be built upon at successive PrepComs and can be fed constructively and progressively into the 2020 Review Conference.

The Vienna Group of Ten takes pride in the fact that our carefully negotiated working paper texts have been drawn on in detail at previous meetings when considering how to best approach and advance the so-called ‘Vienna issues’. The Vienna Group of Ten commends its paper to the Preparatory Committee and trusts that it will again prove useful in ensuring these issues are given appropriate weight during our discussions here.

We stand ready to engage constructively with other States party to discuss our paper and the ideas it contains.

Thank you.