Mr Chairman,

At the start of this new review cycle making progress on nuclear disarmament towards our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons remains a top priority for the Netherlands. Together with our partners of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) and others we want to play a constructive role and come up with ideas and suggestions to bring us closer to this goal.

The current international climate is no reason to lean back. It may make progress more difficult, but that simply means we have to work harder for it.

We will have to pair ambition with realism: nuclear disarmament will not happen overnight, but we have to move forward now. We should discuss and determine what is possible in this NPT cycle.

We should try to set a positive agenda for 2020 and beyond starting at this prepcom.

Thereby we should concentrate on what unites us, not what divides us. This may include relevant elements from the 2010 Action Plan.

The NPT remains the constitution, the cornerstone for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Negotiations on a nuclear weapons ban, in which the Netherlands is also engaged, take place on a parallel track. It is clear that there are different positions on this issue. We must listen to each other and accept our disagreements, instead of letting them dominate our discussions here. After all, it appears that none here wishes to have the processes interfere with each other.

We should aim to restore trust and build confidence in a divided community. We could start by enhancing transparency and emphasize the inclusive nature of the NPT: the NPT belongs to all of us.

What could be further elements for a such a positive agenda?

Can we agree on starting a dialogue on disarmament with all involved, based on consensus and with the aim to search for new ways to make progress? What steps should we take and can we take now to get closer to our common aim of global zero? This idea was on the table at the 2015 revcon. Can we agree to pick this up?

Can we agree on a new and regular process of reporting for this cycle, both for nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states? Can we also agree on an improved and common reporting format as to be able to better compare progress made? Can we agree on other transparency measures, for example with regard to the locations and numbers of nuclear weapons or on command and control issues?

Can we agree to discuss steps to further reduce the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines?

Can we agree to work towards negotiating an FMCT, building on the final report of the GGE FMCT and the work that will be undertaken by the High Level Preparatory Group?

Can we agree that we have to find ways to incorporate the important concept of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon use with security and stability considerations as the underlying basis for further disarmament?
Can we agree to further our work on nuclear disarmament verification via initiatives as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) and the upcoming GGE on verification?

Can we agree to work towards negotiating Negative Security Assurances to build trust and confidence as an important intermediate step towards global zero?

Can we agree on further steps to reduce the level of alertness of nuclear weapons, for example with regard to targeting? Can the ‘launch on warning’ concept be taken out of nuclear strategies?

Can we discuss accelerated reductions of nuclear arsenals before the end of the current newSTART arrangements in 2018? We strongly believe all non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe should be included in new reductions.

Can we agree on starting a discussion on what a world without nuclear weapons should look like and what instruments and practical arrangements we need to maintain such a world?

Mr Chairman,

These are all rhetorical questions. But of course we need to make progress on all these issues.

The Netherlands stands ready to discuss the setup of a positive agenda for the 2020 review conference and is open for ideas and suggestions. We believe that the only way to make progress is via a common way forward, based on what unites us. We should actively strive to overcome our divisions by enhancing transparency and building trust. It’s only in this way that we can make 2020 a success.

Thank you.