Thank you Mr Chair. The New Agenda Coalition would wish at the outset to put on record its appreciation for the work that has gone into producing this merged text – CRP.4 – which we find to be a very coherent paper and one that, in most respects, reflects in a fair and balanced way, the many voices we have heard over the course of our deliberations here. It is, Mr Chair, a solid basis for our further work and we are duly grateful to you and to our Subsidiary Body chair, His Excellency Benno Laggner, for the work you have both done.

When we began our work three weeks ago we had two tasks before us – to conduct an honest assessment of implementation over the current review cycle and to chart a credible course forward including in order to meet the aspirations of all our NPT community regarding the future of our Treaty. This draft, in a number of respects, delivers on both fronts. In some respects, however, there is a necessity for additional strengthening.

On the Humanitarian Initiative, we acknowledge the attempt to reflect in your text the prominence of this issue, both as a source of significant concern at the consequences of any nuclear weapon detonation and as a driver, and impetus, for greater action. It is our strong view, however, that the text does not accurately reflect either the depth of concern or the urgency of action – nor does it give due recognition to the facts and evidence presented at the three Conferences held over the past five years.

In particular, Mr Chair, we note that OP29 has only very limited references to these important fact-based Conferences and no recognition of the significance of the evidence presented at them. Understatement – such as, for example, that it was only “a large number of States that attended” when of course, it was an
“overwhelming majority” of States (over 80% of the NPT community) underplays the importance of this Initiative.

More significantly, the NAC regrets the deletion of the key language that “new information has emerged regarding the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and that this information raises significant implications for assessments of nuclear weapons under international law”. This was an important element in OP26 of CRP3 which has been lost and must be reinserted.

Mr Chair, we welcome the reference now to the Joint Statement delivered by Austria on behalf of 159 States parties regarding the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. From the perspective of the NAC, however, it is not simply the number of countries supporting this Statement that is significant. Its real significance lies in the message supported by these 159 countries. This message – the very heart of the Statement – is that it is in the interests of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons never be used again under any circumstances. When referencing this Statement supported by the overwhelming majority of NPT States parties its substantive message must also be made clear.

Mr Chair,

As we noted earlier, the need for urgent implementation of Article VI is informed not only by the humanitarian imperative but also by our determination that, for the credibility of the Treaty, the slow pace of progress to date is unsustainable. A number of elements have been added to CRP.4, however, that somewhat overstate the record to date and which might seem to suggest that there is no intention to do anything other than maintain the current trajectory of progress on implementation of Article VI. In OP8 for example we have lost recognition of the “slow pace” of the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments and which might seem to suggest that
the status quo is acceptable. We would also welcome clarity, Mr Chair, regarding the introduction of the phrase “as perceived by some States Parties” into this paragraph which could be taken, for instance, as suggesting that some States, for example, do not see “breaches of the Treaty’s obligations” as undermining confidence in it.

In addition, Mr Chair, with respect to OP20, while we would not dispute that there may very well be positive steps to be noted, we worry about the precedent set, in the NPT context, by giving recognition to policies that have been determined unilaterally and subjected only to self-assessment.

The NAC welcomes, Mr Chair, that the Conference recognises that greater and accelerated efforts are required to implement Article VI of the Treaty and relevant undertakings given at subsequent Review Conferences, including through the specification of concrete benchmarks and timelines as agreed in this paper. In this regard, we are pleased to note the retention of useful language in OP 42 (6) calling for the immediate cessation of the development of new types of nuclear weapons and qualitative improvement of existing ones.

We note, too, language in OP 42 (7) on reviews of military and security concepts, doctrines and policies within this coming review cycle but would request reporting on this by both nuclear weapon States and those in nuclear military alliances. We are pleased to see in OP 42(4) a reference to non-strategic weapons as called for by many States parties.

Where benchmarks and timelines have not been included, Mr Chair, the NAC expects that measures will be implemented, and equally reported on, in a manner that reflects the recognition in this paragraph of the need for greater and accelerated efforts.
Finally Mr Chair, we welcome the additional clarity brought to OP19 regarding the legal approaches able to elaborate the effective measures for the full implementation of Article VI. We note that this clarity may seem to be undermined in other paragraphs – most notably in OP 42 (2).

This paragraph needs to include a specific reference to the fact that a multilateral legal framework will be a necessary part of the effective measures required for the full implementation of article VI. As drafted, Mr Chair, there is no suggestion that any of the multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral and unilateral measures to be pursued need to be legally effective.

We would also welcome a clearer message about the urgency with which the necessary legal framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons must be pursued. This was a concern we had, equally, with the precursor texts to CRP.4. We remain concerned that the final paragraph of the paper (OP 42(20)) gives the impression that moving forward on legally effective measures is a longer-term, perhaps unattainable, goal. The NAC is firmly of the view that this Conference must endorse an approach which sees the accelerated pursuit of various intermediate measures at the same time as we move forward on the establishment of the legal framework necessary to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr Chair,

The NAC reiterates its appreciation for your work and that of the Swiss SBI Chair in producing this paper. The NAC remains committed to working with you and others here.