Mr Chairman

We thank you for your continued efforts to produce a text on which consensus can be found. I will make some preliminary remarks. We will provide you with some detailed comments on the manuscript which I would hope to have the opportunity to discuss with you.

Mr Chairman

Despite comments made by some yesterday, it is a consensus that we should be looking for. How can anything other than a consensual outcome strengthen this treaty? A non-consensual outcome would indicate that there were very different interpretations of the treaty or of its implementation. That must mean a weakening of the treaty overall.

There were several comments yesterday about the need to listen to the majority.

We have just listened again to the statement by Austria on behalf of 159 countries that they made almost three weeks ago.

To simply re-read that statement is to imply that the debate has not moved on, and that we’ve all been wasting our time for three weeks. The debate has moved on. We are still a long way from consensus, but we are closer than we were a week ago. Re-reading the statement at this stage does not
demonstrate that others have not been listening, it simply demonstrates that those who first read it have not.

We have listened, and we have listened carefully.

We hear a majority say they are more concerned about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons than they were before. We acknowledge that this raised awareness needs to be addressed in the report, most appropriately in the preamble or chapeau which is where this language sits in the NPT itself and in the 2010 outcome document.

We hear a majority of countries say that nuclear weapons should never be used again under any circumstances. While we respect that view, that is language which cannot command consensus because to sign up to it would contradict our policy of nuclear deterrence. We will not knowingly sign up to something contradictory and we will not be changing our deterrent policy in the next 10 days.

For this same reason we will need to delete point 6 at paragraph 42: we are committed to a world free of nuclear weapons but until the conditions permit that – and we will work to establish those conditions - we will keep a credible minimum deterrent. Making the commitment at point 6 could mean that we will not be able to make the changes necessary to maintain the credibility of our deterrent. We cannot know how security conditions and other capabilities will evolve. We would note that we do everything we can to avoid the use of nuclear weapons, and that they have not been used for almost 70 years.

We also hear a majority of states say that awareness of the HINW should be raised. We see a response to this argument at point 18 of paragraph 42.
As I said Mr Chairman, we listen carefully. Sometimes we hear the majority being invoked on an issue for which the majority has not obviously voiced an opinion.

I was surprised to hear some insisting that the draft needs to note the outcome of the conferences on the HINW. As I understand it, even states that attended those conferences did not all sign up to those outcomes. To my knowledge, those outcomes were issued in the names of the respective Chair.

So how many states have endorsed those outcomes? There was a suggestion that all 159 states who put their names to the statement by Austria have. But have they? That statement refers to those conferences and quotes from some of the outcome language but there’s nothing in that statement that explicitly endorses those outcomes in their entirety.

We are also quite clear that only a proportion of those that have expressed their concern about the HINW support the concept that there is a legal gap in the NPT. It is a smaller proportion of that group that believes that gap must be filled by a legal framework and only a further subdivision of that proportion that insists the legal framework must take the form of a nuclear weapons convention or a ban treaty.

We will not agree that there is a gap in the NPT to be filled or a framework to be established by single legal instrument.

As I made clear in an earlier statement, a nuclear weapons convention could well be needed in the future, but as a means of maintaining a world free from nuclear weapons, not as a means of getting us to that point. We could consider some language on this issue framed in those terms, similar to that used in previous outcome documents.

As I also made clear, a ban treaty would be nothing more than a referendum on the NPT. It risks being deeply damaging to the environment of security that
the NPT has created and maintains, and to the trust that underpins the transfer of proliferation sensitive technology. We are supposed to be looking at actions to strengthen the implementation of the Treaty, not damage it, and we are not prepared to agree a text that leaves the door open on such a possibility.

Nor can we accept the notion that actions can only be considered disarmament if they have taken place within the context of a multilateral framework. To do so would deny actions that have cut Cold War arsenals by 80%. It would we to deny unilateral steps that have taken courage to implement and of which we are justifiably proud. Saying that disarmament has not taken place does not move the debate on.

We hear the calls for time frames and benchmarks for disarmament. In 2010 we agreed to a timeframe on reporting which we honoured. We do not rule out identifying timeframes and/or benchmarks for commitments made in this RevCon’s outcome document. But we cannot set out a timeframe for the complete elimination of our nuclear weapons. It would be meaningless, and act neither as a spur nor an incentive.

We hear the criticism of the P5 process. But what makes a greater contribution to disarmament: a conference to raise awareness of the HINW attended by almost all the NNWS or a meeting to build trust attended by all the nuclear weapons states, trust which will be necessary to underpin concrete steps on disarmament?

The P5 process was criticised for being small and exclusive. Its size is a function of this Treaty to which we are all states parties. It was clear when we each signed up to the Treaty that there would be five parties that had a different status under the treaty to everyone else.

The P5 process was also criticised for being opaque. We have endeavoured to improve transparency. Recent P5 meetings have had sessions to which civil society and the media have been invited. For the first time, at the P5
Conference in London, a session was held with NNWS. And over the last 12 months he P5 have had a sustained dialogue with the countries of the NPDI.

We listen carefully and hear that the UKNI attracts praise for being a partnership between a NWS and a NNWS.

We would be keen to build on these approaches, building genuine partnerships between NWS and NNWS.

Mr Chairman

The outcome in 2010 was a very significant achievement. That it was so significant would make building upon it a challenge at the best of times. The current security climate means that these are not the best of the times. That said, we fully recognise that a simple reaffirmation of the 2010 outcome would indicate stagnation within the regime, and that we must find further incremental steps to take forward in the coming Review Cycle.

We would welcome a signal from others of their willingness to work together to identify actions and commitments to strengthen the Treat’s implementation that can find consensus. In the restatement of positions adopted at the beginning of this RevCon, we do not hear that willingness.

Thank you.