Madam President,

Article VI of this Treaty imposes upon each State Party an obligation to enter into and conclude good faith negotiations that would produce agreed legally binding measures placing the process of nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. Ireland’s work at this Conference has been guided by this.

Today, 80% of the NPT membership - an overwhelming majority - subscribes to the position that nuclear weapons must never be used again, under any circumstances, and that the only way to guarantee this is through their total elimination. There has recently been a further development in the form of the humanitarian pledge mentioned by Austria, through which, as of this week, a clear majority of the NPT membership has undertaken to progress towards effective measures to fill the legal gap in Article VI.

The humanitarian impacts discussion has produced new information and awareness about the risks associated with the possession of nuclear weapons, and the consequences for all, especially women and girls, that would flow from any detonation. These risks and consequences have asked very serious questions of the international rule of law on nuclear weapons and what this means for the safety of our citizens. It is a matter of profound regret that this Conference could not begin to answer these questions.

Regardless, the level of support enjoyed by the humanitarian impacts discussion, including among a growing number of civil society organisations, international organisations including the ICRC, demonstrates beyond any doubt that the parameters of our discussion on nuclear disarmament has changed forever. That is the new reality.

The New Agenda Coalition has started mapping out possible pathways to achieve effective measures for nuclear disarmament. Further work in this regard will be an urgent priority for Ireland in the coming period. It was from the 2013 OEWG, established by the General Assembly at its 67th session, that a NAC paper submitted by Egypt first explored the essential elements of an instrument to fulfill Article VI. This was developed by the NAC through two subsequent working papers, the latest of which was submitted by New Zealand to this Conference.

Ireland believes that serious efforts to identify and pursue effective measures for the implementation of Article VI are required as a matter of urgency. It seems clear to most that to be effective, these measures would require to be legally binding. As the NPT approaches 50, work to achieve this must in our view begin immediately.

Madam Chair,

It is a matter of particular regret for my delegation that this Conference has not been in a position to make progress towards long-overdue and much needed implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. We wish to record our particular gratitude to the
Government of Finland and to Ambassador Jaako Laajava of Finland for his unstinting efforts since 2011 and hope that progress will be made in the near future. For now, it is time for reflection and we hope re-engagement.

In closing, Madam Chair, last but very far from least, Ireland would like to thank you for your hugely committed personal efforts and consummate professionalism throughout this Review Conference in your extensive consultations with States Parties. My delegation would also wish to express its warm appreciation for the tireless efforts of all the Chairs of the Main Committees, of the Subsidiary Bodies and also the staff of the Secretariat.