Delivered by Ms. Angela Kane, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

I am pleased to send my greetings to the Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons.

I commend the Government of Austria for hosting this event, which builds upon the widely attended and pioneering conferences held in Norway and Mexico.

This initiative has brought humanitarian considerations to the forefront of nuclear disarmament. It has energized civil society and Governments alike. It has compelled us to keep in mind the horrific consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons.

This perspective is essential in confronting those who view nuclear weapons as a rational response to growing international tensions or as a symbol of national prestige. It underscores the senselessness of pouring funds into modernizing the means for our mutual destruction while we are failing to meet the challenges posed by poverty, climate change, extremism and the destabilizing accumulation of conventional arms.

We are about to enter the 70th year of the nuclear age. History has taught us many lessons about the dangers inherent in nuclear weapons.

Possession does not prevent international disputes from occurring, but it makes conflicts more dangerous. Maintaining forces on alert does not provide safety, but it increases the likelihood of accidents. Upholding doctrines of nuclear deterrence does not counter proliferation, but it makes the weapons more desirable. Growing ranks of nuclear armed-States does not ensure global stability, but instead undermines it.

These conferences have deepened our knowledge of the risks of use and the fundamental inability of our emergency response system to cope. The more we understand about the humanitarian impacts, the more it becomes clear that we must pursue disarmament as an urgent imperative.

No country disputes the desirability of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. After all, this was the very first objective identified by the United Nations General Assembly. The universal acceptance of this goal led the International Court of Justice to
determine that the disarmament obligation transcends any treaty and is a requirement under customary international law.

I hope all participants come away with new resolve to pursue effective measures for the achievement of nuclear disarmament.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful conference.