Mr. Chairman,

India has been unwavering in its commitment to universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. Over the years it has initiated or supported several proposals and measures for achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament in a time bound manner.

India participated in the Oslo and Nayarit meetings on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. As at the previous meetings, our participation in this meeting in Vienna is premised on the shared concern on the serious threat to the survival of mankind that could be posed by the use of nuclear weapons.

This is not a new concern. The international community has been aware of the catastrophic impact of nuclear weapons’ use since the dawn of the nuclear age. Fortunately, there has been no use of nuclear weapons after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, we cannot be complacent. There is a need to strengthen the international norm of nearly seventy years of non-use of nuclear weapons. We need to progressively reduce nuclear dangers, while addressing risks of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

Our efforts should be directed towards generating support for policy and legal measures for increased restraints on the use of nuclear weapons in a step by step manner. Unfortunately, existing instruments contain no restraints on use and focuses exclusively on possession. There is need to correct this imbalance through a range of measures as this issue concerns all and cannot be confined to the framework of a single treaty.

It is for this reason that India has underlined that these discussions can be more meaningful if they are inclusive and if they encourage the participation of all states including the states possessing nuclear weapons. While India has participated in the previous two meetings and is present at this Conference it would have been better if all other nuclear weapon states too were present. This
calls for reflection on the appropriate framework for this important discussion. In this regard, we underline our support for the Conference on Disarmament, which is the world’s single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum.

We continue to hold that in terms of process this initiative should do no harm to the established disarmament machinery and that in terms of substance it should do no harm to our long term nuclear disarmament goals. At the same time it should not distract us from practical steps agreed in multilateral forums to address nuclear dangers and concerns on nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

In our view, nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed global and non-discriminatory multilateral framework. We have called for a meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines. Given the complex current international situation, the need for building global trust is all the more imperative.

We believe that increasing restraints on use of nuclear weapons would reduce the probability of their use – whether deliberate, unintentional or accidental and this process could contribute to the progressive de-legitimization of nuclear weapons, an essential step for their eventual elimination, as has been the experience for chemical and biological weapons.

As a responsible nuclear power India has a policy of credible minimum deterrence based on a No First Use posture and non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states. We are prepared to convert these into bilateral or multilateral legally binding arrangements.

Pursuant to UNGA resolution 68/32, India has supported the commencement of negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of CD/1999.

Without prejudice to the priority we attach to nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of an FMCT that meets India’s national security interests.

Mr Chairman,
Achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons will require commitments on part of the international community, both nuclear states as well as non-nuclear states. This goal will test the political will and credibility of both.

For the nuclear weapon states, in particular those that possess the largest arsenals a commitment to have an agreed multilateral framework of universal acceptance on nuclear disarmament will be an important and essential step, which can then be followed up with steps that would lead to the progressive reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in international affairs and security doctrines thus paving the way for their eventual elimination.

For the non-nuclear weapon states, including those currently seeking the protection of nuclear weapons through alliance relationships, a renewed commitment to global nuclear disarmament will be an equally important step. Here too concrete actions towards the goal of nuclear disarmament will test the credibility of national positions of non-nuclear weapon states.

Mr. Chairman, in the UN General Assembly’s First Committee, India has sponsored for a number of years resolutions which give expression to some of the concerns being discussed at this Conference. These include a resolution on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons, which is intended to raise the legal barriers against the use of nuclear weapons.

For reasons that are difficult to understand, some states, including the host country of this Conference, which are today in the forefront of efforts to highlight the humanitarian impact of use of nuclear weapons have voted against this resolution. This gap between advocacy and commitment, between word and action, has long stymied international efforts to build a genuine global movement in favour of nuclear disarmament. This credibility gap has to go.

Our participation in this meeting in Vienna is based on the hope that renewed attention on the most serious threat to the survival of mankind posed by the use of nuclear weapons would help generate positive momentum for global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. All states, as well as NGOs and civil society have a vital stake in achieving this noble goal.

Thank you.