Mr President,

Let me start by aligning myself with the EU statement delivered earlier.

For the Netherlands revitalization of the CD remains an important topic which we should continue to address in order to try to find a way out of the current deadlock in the disarmament machinery. This will not be easy. Last week we discussed in this Chamber the prospects of a Programme of Work for the CD. This debate underlined once again the difficulties we face regarding the adaptation and implementation of such a Programme. Time passed by since the last time the CD was indeed fulfilling its mandate – that is negotiating disarmament treaties. Now, 15 years on and with no results being produced, we see a CD that is slowly eroding and losing its credibility.

It is not so much the stagnation in the CD we are frustrated about, but the lack of meaningful progress as to a multilateral approach of nuclear disarmament. The maintenance of the CD should not be our primary objective, but making real progress should be. Therefore in our view it are not attempts to start discussing disarmament in other fora that are to blame, but it is the status quo in the CD itself that is responsible for that. We still believe that the CD can play a role, but we are open to alternative approaches. In principal we are interested in all possibilities that can really take us forward; the forum in which such negotiations take place is in our view of lesser importance.

In our search for ways to get the disarmament machinery going again we welcome today’s opportunity to discuss the issue of revitalization of the CD. At the 67th meeting of the First Committee together with Switzerland and South Africa we tabled decision 67/519 to keep the revitalization of the CD and multilateral disarmament negotiations also on the agenda of the First Committee for this year.

We are open to discuss the ideas and suggestions put forward by Switzerland on examining and discussing the work methods of the CD, including its procedures and operational principles that put heavy constraints to this body. We look favorable to ideas and suggestions that can help us to more easily reach consensus in this forum in order to be able to start substantive work as soon as possible.
We think we should discuss the way we approach the Programme of Work in the CD. As for the Netherlands, we take a pragmatic view. For us agreement on a Programme of Work is not a goal in itself, but a means to start meaningful substantive work. A Programme of Work is mere a tool, an enabling instrument at best. The goal is to get to work in the CD on the issue of nuclear disarmament. For us that means that we should start negotiations on meaningful instruments that will further that cause.

In this regard I fully subscribe to the remark made last week by the Ambassador of Indonesia that the responsibility to get to the adoption and implementation of a Programme of Work should not only lie with the CD Presidency, but should be a shared responsibility of all members of the CD. Its only when we work together we may make real progress towards adaptation and subsequently implementation of a Programme of Work.

We should also discuss our Rules of Procedure regarding a Programme of Work. In the case that we would reach consensus about a Programme of Work, our Rules of Procedure now stipulate that such a Programme would only be valid for one year. This means we would have to go through the same painful exercise again every year, with the risk we again may not agree. We think we should therefore look into the possibility to lengthen the validity of a Programme of Work.

Another issue we could discuss is if our work in the CD may be helped by lengthening the duration of the CD presidencies, as suggested both by Indonesia and Switzerland. I see advantages to a longer Presidency when it comes to the preservation of knowledge and more time to negotiate a Programme of Work, but also see disadvantages for example when it comes to the burden such a presidency would pose on smaller delegations. Another idea we may discuss regarding the Presidency of the CD is whether the CD would benefit from an elected President.

An issue that also merits discussion is the issue of wider participation and enhanced engagement with civil society in the CD. Can civil society play an active role within the CD, just like they do in the Open Ended Working Group?

Mr President,

The Netherlands looks forward to a continued debate on this important topic of revitalization both in the CD and in the General Assembly. We hope that this debate will take place in a transparent and inclusive manner and in an outcome orientated spirit. We also hope that this debate may eventually take away the hurdles that now stand in the way of the start of real negotiations.

Thank you