Mr. President,

As this is the first time the Nigerian delegation is taking the floor under your presidency, we congratulate you on becoming president of the CD. Like other delegations that have spoken before us, we assure you of our cooperation and support. We would also like to express our confidence in your ability to lead us as we seek a way out of the stalemate that has paralysed the CD for far too long and prevented us from producing a programme of work.

The Nigerian delegation notes with satisfaction the extensive consultations that you carried out prior to the commencement of the 2013 session of the CD. We also note that you have continued to consult as broadly as possible, with a view to reaching agreement on a programme of work. We commend you for the efforts you have put into coming up with a draft programme of work and we share your hope that we will be able to agree on, as you put it: a package acceptable to all.

Of the core issues in the CD, the negotiation of an FMCT is the one that seems to be at the centre of the stalemate we have been witnessing for close to two decades. Now, when we place the President’s draft programme of work side by side with CD/1864 and CD/1933 we find that the common thread in all of them is a reference to CD/1299 as the basis for negotiating a treaty banning the production of fissile material. What this tells us is that in 18 years the CD has not been able to come up with anything different to deal with FMCT other than what Ambassador Gerald Shannon presented in his report of March 1995. This highlights the fact that CD/1299 was as significant then as it is now.

The positive thing that we see in CD/1299 which makes us believe that it could form the basis for negotiating an FMCT is the fact that the mandate for the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee to carry out the negotiation leaves the door open for all delegations to raise within the Committee all issues of concern to them relating to fissile material. This, according to the Shannon report, includes issues pertaining to the scope of the treaty. So, whether it is future production or existing stocks, anything and everything should be on the negotiating table. In the light of this opening therefore, the Nigerian delegation calls on all delegations to show flexibility and support this most protracted aspect of the draft programme of work.
Finally Mr. President,
We agree with your assessment that this may be a make or break year for the CD. Its past successes notwithstanding, the CD risks becoming insular and disconnected if it continues to act in a manner that runs counter to the legitimate expectations of the global public. The CD is at a crossroads and collectively we have to decide which direction we want to take it.

I thank you.