Statement by H.E. Mr. Paul van den IJssel
Ambassador of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament
As delivered
Geneva, 12 March 2013

Madame President,

I would like to start by thanking Miss Fihn for her statement and also for making the effort to address this body.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the active way you are conducting your Presidency. Your consultations with all of us are highly appreciated, as is the way in which you actively try to seek common ground to find a way forward. We commend you for that.

Let me than turn to today’s topic for discussion, FMCT.

We fully align ourselves with the statement that was given earlier by the EU.

I first would like to emphasize that our discussions on FMCT and the other core issues cannot substitute for the work we should be conducting in the CD, namely the start of real negotiations on this topic. We deeply regret that the CD has not been the forum for negotiations on an FMCT nor for any other topic for the last 16 years. Let me stress again that like many other delegations in this room we stand ready to immediately commence such
negotiations and that we are flexible as to the wording of an enabling mandate.

Madame President,

You and the distinguished delegates in this room are well aware of the importance we attach to concluding a verifiable FMCT. We see such a Treaty as an indispensable step towards a world free of Nuclear Weapons.

As progress in the CD on FMCT seems to be a bridge to far, we are satisfied that resolution 67/53 on the establishment of a GGE was adopted with such a large majority by the General Assembly. We sincerely hope that the work of the GGE can indeed help to bring the start and conclusion of real negotiations on an FMCT closer. Let me assure you that the Netherlands is strongly committed to help in whatever way it can to bring about a successful outcome of the GGE. That is why today I would like to share some preliminary thoughts and ideas we have to reach such an outcome.

In our view the GGE should focus on finding common ground. We are not starting from scratch of course: a lot of work has been done in the past years, including a number of events in the margins of the CD. What are the elements on which we can more easily reach consensus? But we should also explore if compromises are possible on the more difficult parts like stocks or the contents of the verification provisions. In short: we should not shy away of putting everything on the table and see where progress is possible.
The outcome of the GGE could be a report to the Secretary-General and the CD which contains an overview of issues where agreement may be within reach and what the more challenging items are. Maybe we could also include some thoughts on possible ways how to overcome the existing differences. For example: should we strive for an integral approach – One Treaty dealing with all the elements – or should we also look into the possibility of working towards a main/core treaty with separate protocols on issues like stocks?

Another question is how to continue after the GGE? It is clear that this will be first up to the GA and CD, where the issue will be referred back to. Much will also depend on the outcomes of the GGE. Questions facing us are: will the issue be than completely left to the CD again, or do we see added value in a role of the GA. And if yes what could that role be?

Madame President,

To sum up, in absence of agreement within the CD we see the GGE as the way forward towards the start of negotiations on an FMCT. The Netherlands is committed to make this GGE a success. The GGE should explore all issues to see where progress is possible and should discuss possible ways forward on the more difficult ones. It will not be easy, but we sincerely hope the GGE can bring us the necessary oil to get the Negotiations on Fissile Material started and thereby getting the rusted disarmament machinery going again.
As a final word, Madame President, I would like to refer to the remarks made by my German colleague about the use of threats and intimidation against other states being unacceptable. I will not make any further comments on this issue, but let me just underline that we fully associate ourselves with these remarks made by Germany.

Thank you.