Mr. President, Secretary General, Madam High Representative, Dear Colleagues

This will be the last time that I will have the opportunity to speak in the Conference on Disarmament; therefore it will also be the last time that I welcome a new President, wish him luck and assure him of the support of my delegation.

Mr. President

When I arrived almost 4 years ago, the ink of document 1864 was barely dry. I came with the hope that unlike many of my predecessors I would see the CD really working again. As we all know, that hope turned out to be ill founded. 1864, 1933, 1948, for others perhaps important years in history, for me names of well-meaned attempts to get us back to work, that all failed. In the last 4 years I have expressed often -here in this hall- my country’s frustration about this stagnation, I will not repeat those words now.

We regularly had discussions in this hall about the cause of this stagnation. Is it mainly the way we work and have organized ourselves or is it only the lack of political will? Those who advocate the latter position always point out that the CD has produced results while applying the Rules of Procedure and organizational arrangements still in force. But the last result the CD produced dates from 17 years ago, I think that it is hard to imagine an organization, let alone a company, that in such a situation – if it would still exist that is, would not have looked extremely critically at the way it is organized and would have made some changes.

But it is also true that there is a lack of political will and courage to make the bold and often painful moves necessary to achieve real progress.

When looking back at the last 4 years it is not the stagnation of the CD that dominates my memory. As Disarmament Ambassador I have represented my country at many meetings, conferences and negotiations. I will not name them all, but I will especially remember the BWC revcon and the ATT negotiations. I remember them with joy and with gratefulness. Both showed that multilateral disarmament can work. I will also dearly miss our annual trip to New York to the First Committee.
Mr. President

Multilateralism means that you have to deal with those you disagree with, that you have to find common ground with States that have a different assessment, different interests and opinions. I think that is done most effectively in a collegial and transparent atmosphere. Looking back at the last 4 years I think that the CD has lived up to this aspect of Multilateralism. I have immensely appreciated the contact with all colleagues and delegations. I have appreciated the collegial atmosphere both in Geneva and in New York. We were all on the same boat, and although the CD boat was sinking deeper and deeper in the mud, it was a pleasure and a privilege to be part of the crew. Thank you all for that.

Mr. President,

I also would like thank our SG Mr. Tokayev and his deputy Mr Sareva, for consistently trying to help us to get out of this mess. Thanks too to all staff members and interpreters for all your work. I had wished we could have made you work harder with a CD in full swing, but you did a great job. Thanks to the NGO’s, for showing critical interest, for being our mirror that sometimes does not show us the face we would like to see. And not in the least thanks for being an excellent chronicler.

As a final word to all of you who stay behind in Geneva in the CD. I believe that multilateral work almost inevitably is a story of 999 steps backwards and 1000 steps forward. Multilateral work is about trying the same things over and over again in the hope that there will be a time when they finally work. It is a story of finding the right mixture of ambition and realism. Ambition to determine the direction, realism dictates the pace. Ambitious realism.

Rapid success is not the most striking feature of multilateral work and most certainly not of Multilateral Disarmament, but please keep on trying. I wish you all the best of luck.

Thank you Mr. President