Mr. President,

Let me start by aligning myself with the EU statement delivered earlier. I would also like to align with his welcome to you and his words of thanks to the outgoing Indonesian Presidency for its efforts and hard work.

You have asked us to present our views on the issue of a Programme of Work of the CD.

Like many others inside and outside this Council Chamber we are deeply frustrated about the continuing stagnation of the Conference. Every week, month and year that goes by without doing meaningful work, means further erosion of this body, further loss of what remains of its credibility. In our view it are not attempts to start discussing Disarmament in other fora that are to blame, it is the status quo, the stagnation, in the CD itself that is responsible for that.

As to the issue of the Programme of Work, we are pragmatic. 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 a mere 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.

We would therefore find it problematic to support the adoption of a Programme of Work that is lacking substance in the sense that it will not bring us closer to the start of negotiations. That is just providing us with a discussion mandate. Do we need a work programme to discuss issues? As said before a Programme of Work is a tool, not an end in itself. We could not see the adoption of such a minimal work programme as proof of the CD making progress.

We have expressed many times that we belief that the issue of Fissile Material is the topic for which there is most support to start negotiations. The NPT action plan, voting patterns in the First Committee and our discussions here in the CD are ample proof of that. So it has been and still is our position that we should start negotiations on this issue as soon as possible. We also continue to belief that the mandate for such negotiations contained in CD 1299 offers a basis broad enough to allow anyone to raise his or hers specific points or concerns during the negotiations.

As to the exact wording of such a work programme we are flexible. The Netherlands has supported all proposals to that effect in recent years that different Presidents have submitted to the Conference.
Mr. President,

A few words about the CD itself. Last week we heard a number of Delegations emphasizing the important role of the CD. We do not disagree that the CD has been important in the past, but in the last 15 years we have seen no results being produced. For us 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. We still believe and hope that the CD can play a role in that regard, 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 would take place is in our view of lesser importance.

Thank you