Good morning, dear colleagues,

We are glad to be back for the resumption of the CD activities after its long recess. India at the helm of the Conference of Disarmament augurs well for our future work. Brazil and India enjoy excellent bilateral relations. Besides being partners in the BRICS and in IBSA, our large democracies and growing economies share similar challenges stemming from being developing, pluralistic, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious nations. It is no surprise that our coordination in Geneva is smooth and easy. We have every reason to place full confidence in your Presidency.

Mr. President,

We listened attentively to your plans. They have your imprint: no non-sense and down to earth. Moreover, your dedicated work, Ambassador Anupam Ray, in extensive consultations has paved the way for a compromise on our work programme. I wish you the best of luck in kickstarting our year – which I hope will be a fruitful one.

There is little doubt that the international security scenario continues its deteriorating trend. As competition and conflict are becoming unavoidable fixtures, doubts on the effectiveness of multilateralism and disarmament diplomacy become widespread. It looks increasingly evident that the CD ought to send an unequivocal message that we are persevering on our engagement, maintaining lines of communication open, striving to design norms, measures, rules and treaties that bring hope that our future will be more peaceful, more predictable and more disarmed.

It pains us to acknowledge that the Conference’s record in the last three decades is far from unblemished. In very few occasions we have been able to fulfil the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the single multilateral negotiating body for disarmament. But precisely because it is difficult to revert this trend is that we have to redouble our efforts. To initiate a long road, the most difficult step is the first one.

For these reasons, Brazil’s main goal for the CD in 2024 is to set us in the right direction and carry out a first approximation on future negotiations through the work of subsidiary bodies to be established as per your proposal. We have recent
examples of similar decisions that enabled us to have productive years in 2018 and 2022. We do need to finesse much the agreements reached in the past or place undue value in formulations that would predetermine the outcome of the negotiations or define their level of ambition.

One more year without approving our Program of Work would mean one more year of additional discredit to this body. On the other hand, it is not reasonable to assume that we could address all issues that plague the Conference in just one go. They have been accumulating over years. Our Rules of Procedure were designed to serve well a negotiating body, but in practice we have confined ourselves to exercise just the CD’s deliberative function. This disconnect left us with a maze of precedents that contradict the letter of such Rules and no easy way out of this conundrum.

 Acknowledging the limitations and restrictions under which the Conference operates is not tantamount to rule it out as hopeless or even less to disregard its enormous potential to contribute to diffuse tensions and to be a force for peace. Precisely because we understand its usefulness is that we are sure that it can be put to better use.

Brazil entertains little doubt that all those issues hardly will be sorted out only through regular CD discussions. Therefore, a larger exercise such as the convening of SSOD-IV would enable us to grasp the totality of the many ailments afflicting the UN disarmament machinery. As we conceive it, this exercise is not destined to promote a wholesale reformulation. We do not envisage the rewriting of our foundational principles contained in the outcome document of the SSOD-I. But revisiting them should not be considered a heresy. Likewise, we should not feel inhibited to address format and function of disarmament bodies; to incorporate innovations that have proved worthy over the years, to break the artificial silos - legal and diplomatic - that insulate distinct regimes and to provide ways to address effectively key questions concerning transparency, compliance and accountability are clearly required.

Mr. President,

Regarding observers, we are afraid that existing Rules of Procedures allow CD members to block decisions in the absence of consensus. But we are also forced to reckon that unchecked power without accountability is a mix that propitiates abuse. It is reasonable, on the one hand, that Members from a closed body like the CD be consulted whether observers should be allowed to participate in our meetings. On the other, since the operation of the Conference is funded through the UN regular budget, paid by the entire membership, it makes poor politics to pre-empt from participation those that finance our activities. The continuation of this situation risk compromising further the CD. For this reason, if we are not able to approve _en masse_ the requests for observer status, my delegation favours that
each individual submission be put to the approval of the Conference. Let’s not shy away from exercising our responsibilities.

Mr. President,

Please count on the full support of the Brazilian delegation to your work and initiatives. We wish you the best of luck and a happy 2024 to you and to all colleagues of the disarmament community.

Thank you.