Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate Deputy Foreign Minister Rakhmetullin on his election as chair of the 2024 session of the Preparatory Committee. As the preparations for these meetings have demonstrated, we are in good hands. I am grateful for the extensive outreach and consultations the chair has undertaken and for his expertise in the matters related to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I reiterate that you have my full support and the full support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs in seeking a successful conclusion to the Preparatory Committee session.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are now at the halfway point between the conclusion of the Tenth NPT Review Conference and the beginning of the Eleventh NPT Review Conference.

The trajectory we have been on for the past several years has been, frankly speaking, a frustrating one, characterized by division and disagreements.
I share your frustration and disappointment.

I worry that we are moving backwards in our efforts. And when we try to take a step forward, the ground slips beneath our feet.

I remember, as do many of you, the dark years of the Cold War and the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation. While that shadow has never gone away – and will not go away, as long as nuclear weapons exist – it has taken on more alarming tones, recently. The danger has become more acute.

The current heightened nuclear risks – including the threats of use of nuclear weapons, the upgrading and expansion of nuclear arsenals and whispers about the resumption of testing – harken back to that past. I, for one, do not wish to revisit the past.

We cannot credit our collective survival from that 20th century conflict to the logic of nuclear deterrence and to those who oversaw it.

While much credit is due to those who sought to ensure the Cold War remained cold, and to those who invested efforts in arms control and disarmament diplomacy, we should remember that we also owe our survival, in great part, to simple luck.

But we may not be so lucky again in today’s dangerous and complicated geopolitical tensions and rapidly evolving intersection between nuclear weapons, new technologies and new domains of conflict.

This begs two questions: 1) given the lessons we thought we learned, why are we going backwards and 2) more importantly, what are we going to do to reverse these dangerous trends?
Fortunately, we have the NPT to help with the latter. A Treaty that has played a critical role in avoiding nuclear war, in stemming the spread of nuclear weapons, and in moving us towards their eventual elimination.

But the benefits of the NPT can only be realized through the efforts and good faith of its States Parties.

As Secretary-General Guterres has repeatedly stated: Commitments undertaken must be honoured.

States must be accountable for implementing these commitments.

The impact of the current contentious geopolitical environment has put the NPT under enormous strain. But lapsing into cynicism and inaction cannot be permitted; the stakes are too high.

Rather, we must identify avenues for progress and, where they exist, seize upon them.

There are several issues that occur to me, as priorities. I hope you will consider them during the course of your deliberations.

First, as I said, States Parties should recall the obligations already undertaken and pursue disarmament through the accelerated implementation of existing commitments.

Enhanced reporting on the implementation of existing commitments would not only support transparency and accountability, but in so doing would bolster a shared belief in
the good faith of all Parties to the Treaty, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, in working towards nuclear disarmament.

How that reporting is structured requires further deliberation and while reporting in and of itself does not lead to disarmament, disarmament will be significantly enabled by such reporting.

**Second**, States Parties must reject the idea that the only rational basis for disarmament is as a “reward” for successfully resolving our security challenges. **Disarmament is not simply the outcome for international peace and security. It is a prerequisite. It helps to create international peace and security.**

Nuclear disarmament cannot happen overnight, but it will never happen if steps are not taken to make it happen.

The degree of frustration and disappointment among many States Parties at the continual and years-long inability to reach consensus in this forum should not be underestimated.

Deeper still is the frustration over the outstanding commitments related to the fulfillment of Article VI.

I remain concerned that cynicism about the efficacy of this Treaty will erode its many benefits.

Never has it been more important to commence the process of rebuilding trust, of prioritizing dialogue over deterrence and of getting the world back on to the path of the verifiable, irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons.
Third, States Parties must work together to prevent nuclear war or any use of a nuclear weapon – not as a substitute for disarmament, but as means to prevent humanitarian catastrophe.

Since the last time States Parties met, nuclear weapons have continued to be used as tools of coercion. Veiled nuclear threats, which seek to manipulate and create fear, may prove to be proliferation drivers. As the Secretary-General has stated, threats to use nuclear weapons in any capacity are unacceptable.

There is an urgent need to reduce the possibility of mistake, miscalculation and escalation.

This is especially important given the burgeoning intersection between nuclear weapons, new technologies and new domains of conflict.

While advances in technologies have the potential to strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation, they have exposed vulnerabilities utterly unforeseen when the Treaty was negotiated, particularly when it comes to cyber and outer space.

Reinforced crisis communications, instruments to avoid misperception, doctrinal measures such as pledging never to be the first to use nuclear weapons – these are tools that can help us avert disaster and keep us on the path to elimination.

Fourth, States Parties must recommit to reinforcing the non-proliferation regime and supporting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my support for the professionalism and impartiality of the IAEA, its Director General and his staff.

The universalization of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol are essential tools for non-proliferation. The IAEA needs to be endowed with the necessary human and financial resources to tackle the myriad safeguards, security and safety issues that it has been tasked with addressing.

In this context, I recall that the world is still facing the same regional proliferation crises as it was twenty years ago – still without any answers. As those situations become further dire, it is critical that States Parties formulate recommendations for how the NPT can serve as a vehicle for resolving such crises, particularly in the context of Northeast Asia and the Middle East.

The full realization of the 1995 resolution of the Middle East should remain a priority. So too should diplomatic efforts to resuscitate the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a landmark regional non-proliferation agreement. States Parties should call on all parties to that agreement – current and former – to return to its full implementation.

The nuclear programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea remains a clear threat to regional and international peace and security, and a fundamental challenge to the NPT. Finding a diplomatic solution to this Gordian knot is difficult but necessary and States Parties should lead the way.

Fifth, strengthening the link between the NPT and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adds yet another layer of legitimacy to the Treaty. And it enhances the grand bargain at its core.
Advances in the use of nuclear science and technology, including those supported by the IAEA, have improved lives and livelihood around the world, whether in the areas of climate, water management, agriculture or cancer treatment.

It is incumbent upon all States Parties to determine ways in which they can enhance the facilitation of these beneficial applications of nuclear science and technology, through the IAEA and beyond.

I encourage States Parties to consider how they can forge stronger bonds between this community and the development community to the advantage of both.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**We are well overdue for reversing the current trajectory in disarmament and non-proliferation.** We have, for too long, missed chance after chance to strengthen the NPT and to boost the prospects for international peace and security at a time when it is sorely needed.

I wish you the best of luck with your deliberations over the coming two weeks. It is a cliché to say that we are at a crossroads, but we are – and it seems sometimes as if we are paralyzed.

But as things can change very quickly for the worst, they can also change quickly for the better. We must be ready to take the opportunities where they arise, in the spirit of compromise and never losing sight of our overall objective of a world without nuclear weapons.
In this, as in all your endeavors, you can rely upon the full support of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

I thank you very much for your attention.