Thank you Chair.

1 I take the floor on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, Brazil, Ireland, Egypt, Mexico, South Africa and my own country New Zealand.

2 Before commencing my statement, I wish to record the New Agenda Coalition’s sincere condolences and sadness at the passing of Ambassador Sergio Duarte. Ambassador Duarte was a significant figure in the world of multilateral disarmament, and he worked over many years to advance international peace and security.

3 This loss is one felt by our entire community, and we extend our sincere condolences especially to Ambassador Duarte’s family and friends, as well as our colleagues from Brazil.

4 More than a quarter of a century ago, when the New Agenda Coalition was formed, the world had recently emerged from a prolonged period encompassing large nuclear arsenals, high tension
between the largest nuclear powers, and the awareness that miscalculation in a crisis could lead to the world tumbling into the abyss of thermonuclear war.

5 There was a sense of optimism with promising prospects, backed by concrete undertakings, that we were on a road towards a nuclear weapons’ free world and the elimination of the existential threat they pose. Despite some initial progress since the NPT’s indefinite extension in 1995 it is deeply troubling how little progress toward nuclear disarmament has been achieved, despite the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon states, to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

6 We take this opportunity to remind the nuclear weapon states of their obligations under the NPT, and to reaffirm that the Treaty was never intended to create a permanent entitlement for some to retain nuclear weapons.

7 Moreover, in 1995, 2000 and 2010, all NPT States Parties agreed a range of additional commitments to move us along the pathway to global zero.

8 Since then, the vast majority of these commitments remain unfulfilled. Others have been reversed.

9 The longer the nuclear-weapon States rely on arguments that suggest the strategic context is not conducive for disarmament, the more dangerous that context becomes. History has demonstrated that times of international tension, like now, are precisely when multilateralism, arms control and nuclear disarmament measures have proven most useful.

10 Nuclear-weapon States need to commit to ending this ever-more dangerous state of affairs by fulfilling their disarmament obligations and commitments.

11 The failure of the nuclear-weapon States to advance the implementation of their nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments is contributing to a situation in which the world faces elevated levels of nuclear risk.

12 We are especially concerned about the following recent developments.
• Threats of nuclear use, whether implicit or explicit.
• Deterioration and erosion of treaty regimes.
• Current conflicts with a nuclear dimension, including in the Middle East and Europe, as well as heightened tensions in North-East and South Asia.
• Vertical proliferation, including qualitative and quantitative expansion of nuclear arsenals.
• Nuclear modernisation programmes, which are suggestive of the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons.
• Long-standing inertia towards ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty by nuclear-weapon States and recent moves to withdraw ratification, which continue to make the entry into force of the Treaty impossible, with the associated risk that nuclear testing could be resumed.
• Disregard of negative security assurances.
• Low levels of transparency and accountability in nuclear disarmament.
• Extended nuclear deterrence arrangements, including forward deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon States.
• New and unpredictable strategic factors, including developments in outer space, missile-related technologies, artificial intelligence, and cyberspace which could increase the risk of use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.
• The conduct of military exercises involving nuclear weapon components.
• The increased salience of nuclear weapons in military doctrines by the nuclear weapon States, States under extended nuclear security guarantees, and nuclear-armed States outside of the regime.
• And, actions by States that challenge or undermine international law including the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, either directly or indirectly.

Chair, the inertia in nuclear disarmament and arms control processes also causes us and other States Parties serious concern. Improved transparency and measurability of nuclear-weapon States’ implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments would help to ensure greater accountability in the Treaty and its full implementation, as well as helping to build mutual trust among States parties. Such measures are ever more needed in the context we currently find ourselves in
Much discussion at recent NPT meetings has been dedicated to the topic of nuclear risk reduction. We very much agree the nuclear dangers have reached especially perilous levels and urgently need to be reduced.

But at the same time, the approach has left us with significant questions.

- How can we measure nuclear risks?
- If preparations for nuclear weapon use, and thus the possibility of such use, are an intrinsic part of nuclear doctrines, how can nuclear risk realistically be reduced to so-called “safe” levels?
- And how can we even consider a “safe” level, when we have accepted as an international community that while nuclear weapons exist there is the risk they will be used, and would almost certainly have catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences?

We will elaborate a New Agenda Coalition view on nuclear risks in greater detail in our Cluster 1 debate statement.

Allow me to conclude with what we mean when we talk about nuclear risks. Risk is generally understood to be a mathematical calculation of probability multiplied by consequence.

Given the contested nature of nuclear deterrence, and the secrecy surrounding nuclear weapons planning, probabilistic calculations are exceptionally difficult.

What we know, however, is that the consequences of nuclear weapons use are and would be catastrophic, both for humanity and the environment. We witnessed this in Japan in the 1940s when global nuclear arsenals were in the single digits, and we have seen vivid proof of such devastation throughout the era of nuclear testing in the 20th century, consequences of which are still felt by communities today.

Today, after decades of scientific study, we have an improved understanding of the effects of nuclear weapon use which tell us that a nuclear war could lead to tens of millions of immediate casualties, and the death of billions through indirect causes.
At the same time, science, canvassing a wide range of disciplines from climate science to biodiversity, has contributed to an improved empirical understanding of the holistic consequences, wide-ranging and interconnected of nuclear conflict that even more sharply underlines the urgency of preventing it.

The scientific consensus is now that a full-scale nuclear war would lead to plunging global temperatures due to the effects of “nuclear winter” which would have devastating impacts on nature and on agricultural output leading to mass food shortages. Other consequences include economic dislocation and the likely collapse of global supply chains, financial systems, and trade. This situation should alarm everyone.

We cannot prepare, and so we must prevent. Practical action toward nuclear disarmament is critical to that endeavour and cannot be postponed.

I thank you.