Mr. Chairperson,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) members: Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and my own country Mexico.

2. We warmly welcome your appointment as Chair of this year’s First Committee and assure you of the full support and cooperation of the NAC over the coming weeks.

3. As we have done for several years, the New Agenda Coalition will present a draft resolution to this Committee which will be introduced during the thematic debate on nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

4. As a cross-regional grouping, the NAC works actively for concrete progress on nuclear disarmament. Achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons thus remains the NAC’s primary goal.

5. Nuclear disarmament has been on the international agenda since nuclear weapons were first used. Sixty-eight years after the UN General Assembly sought to initiate a process to achieve “the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable for mass destruction,” much remains to be done to achieve and maintain a nuclear-weapons-free world.
6. Given the scale of devastation that nuclear weapons are designed to inflict and the fact that their consequences cannot be constrained within borders, the continued reliance upon them in security doctrines and concepts is indefensible and an unintended invitation to proliferate. It is all too obvious that national security reasons are foremost among the motivations cited by those who continue to maintain such weapons and those aspire to acquire them. The NAC cannot but agree with the remark of the UN Secretary General at the beginning of last year that “there are no right hands for wrong weapons”, simply because the now proven risks associated with them are too great. It is very evident to the NAC, and we believe to the overwhelming majority of States, that - as long as these weapons exist - the possibility of a detonation will remain. And so the only guarantee that this will not happen is the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

7. In February this year, Mexico hosted the Second International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons which aimed at further developing awareness and understanding of the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. That Conference built upon the Conference hosted by Norway last year, which demonstrated that no State, group of States, or international agency could adequately respond to a nuclear weapon detonation, deepened our understanding of the long term and global effects of nuclear weapons. It is becoming clearer from an ever growing body of research that the risk of a detonation occurring is far greater than had previously been perceived. We welcome the announcement by Austria to convene a third conference later this year.

8. Last year saw the successful Open-Ended Working Group on taking forward multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, and the High-Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament, both mandated by overwhelming majorities in the General Assembly. These meetings and the resolutions which followed them were not just demonstrations of a desire for progress on nuclear disarmament they supported the NPT process and made positive contributions to our collective aim: a world free of nuclear weapons.

9. These initiatives, together with the crucial role that civil society plays, have managed to create a new and growing awareness among public opinion around the world on the threat that even a single nuclear weapon poses to our civilization. It is high time for the international community to translate words into concrete action backed by clear timelines.

Mr. Chairperson,

10. The gap between increased understanding of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons on the one hand, and the slow pace in progress - if any - on achieving nuclear disarmament is growing. Rather than merely lamenting that fact, the NAC and many other states, as well as civil society, have chosen to direct much energy towards initiatives that hold the promise of progress on
nuclear disarmament. This is entirely consistent with the obligation of all States to advance nuclear disarmament, although the nuclear-weapon-States have a special and differentiated responsibility in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,

11. Throughout the last 16 years, the NAC has advocated for the implementation of concrete, transparent, mutually reinforcing, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament measures and the fulfilment of obligations and commitments within the framework of the NPT. While there has been some reason for optimism along the way, we have been disappointed by the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, both at the regional and global levels, despite successive undertakings from the nuclear-weapon-States. Although undertakings are not lacking in this field, concrete progress is.

12. The absence in the Middle East of a nuclear-weapon-free zone continues to be a serious concern. The NAC emphasizes the need to fully implement the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and recognizes the endorsement by the 2010 Review Conference of practical steps in a process leading to the full implementation of the 1995 resolution. While noting efforts undertaken to date, expresses its serious concerns regarding the lack of implementation of these steps.

13. Nuclear disarmament is clearly a moral imperative but we would also emphasize that it is an international legal obligation. In spite of the growing international consensus regarding the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons, an estimated 16,000 nuclear devices still exist, and nuclear weapons remain at the heart of the security doctrines of some. Far from strengthening international peace and security, this state of affairs serves to weaken it, aggravating international tensions and conflict, and jeopardizing the collective well-being of all States and peoples.

14. Indeed, in a world where the basic human needs of billions are not being met the growing spending on nuclear weapons is both unacceptable and unsustainable. The allocation of vast resources to retain and modernize nuclear weapons is at odds with international aspirations to development, as expressed by world leaders at the turn of the century. Rather than squandering resources on nuclear weapons, governments should direct much-needed resources towards socio-economic development.

Mr. Chairperson,

15. The Action Plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference provided an important opportunity to put the process towards a nuclear-weapon-free world back on track. The nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their unequivocal
undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, and committed to accelerating progress in this regard. The 2010 Action Plan reaffirmed the decisions taken in 1995 and 2000, including the 13 practical steps, to advance the implementation of Article VI of the NPT.

16. That Action Plan also contained a requirement for the nuclear-weapon States to report in 2014 on the actions they have taken to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, in accordance with Action 5. We carefully took note of the reports presented by the nuclear-weapon States to the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. We read those reports in the hope that they would reveal that some progress had been made since 2010 on the seven clear elements of Action 5 – the only yardstick by which they could be measured. But what they revealed was a continuing reliance by those States on nuclear weapons, no further reductions in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons, no further reductions in operational status, and no significant doctrinal changes that would provide evidence of the concrete progress towards nuclear disarmament to which the nuclear-weapon States recommitted themselves in 2010. We welcome the increased transparency demonstrated by some nuclear-weapon States through their reports, but that was not the primary goal of this exercise. It was about measuring progress.

17. The New Agenda Coalition still looks forward to the implementation by the nuclear-weapon States of their nuclear disarmament commitments, both qualitative and quantitative, in a manner that enables the States parties to regularly monitor progress, including through a standard detailed reporting format. This will enhance confidence and trust not only among the nuclear-weapon States but also between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States and contributing to sustainable nuclear disarmament.

18. In the words of Action 5, the reports of the nuclear-weapon States will allow the Review Conference to take stock and consider the next steps for the full implementation of Article VI. The New Agenda Coalition will contribute fully to that process. We presented a working paper to the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference which was designed to kick-start the debate; the Review Conference must continue that debate and it must inform the next steps we collectively decide to take. What is clear now is that a successful outcome next year will require more than a simple rollover of the 2010 action plan.

Mr. Chairperson,

19. Over the years, significant progress has been made on nuclear non-proliferation objectives, limiting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, concerns about vertical proliferation keep growing. Nuclear disarmament has yet to be realised.
20. Given that more than four decades have passed since the entry into force of the NPT, the status quo on nuclear disarmament continues to be unacceptable. The NAC believes it is time for States to deliver upon their commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons in line with the NPT obligations, to safeguard future generations from the danger arising from the use of nuclear weapons. As such, there is an urgent need for serious discussion on all aspects of the requirements of Article VI of the NPT of a framework for nuclear disarmament. All available forums should be used to this end. Unless and until all options for the elaboration for the “effective measures” envisaged by Article VI are explored, the present slow pace of disarmament will continue. We therefore urge States parties to the NPT during the 2015 Review Conference to establish a subsidiary body to explore options for the elaboration of these “effective measures”.

21. We firmly believe that a legally-binding and multilateral commitment to nuclear disarmament, backed by clearly defined timelines and benchmarks, is long overdue. This is the only way to maintain the integrity and sustainability of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and this aim must guide all future efforts.

Thank you Mr. Chairperson.