Mr. Chair,

Let me start by echoing the other speakers in welcoming you as chair for our deliberations at this year’s session of the First Committee.

Mr. Chair,

Norway wants a strong and effective United Nations, also in the field of disarmament. Civilians continue to suffer as a result of armed conflict. We have a responsibility to eliminate weapons that cannot be used in accordance with international humanitarian law, and to prevent irresponsible and illegal transfers of arms.

Last year, the UN General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty, and already this autumn it will enter into force. Norway is proud to be one of the first 50 states to ratify the (Check against delivery)
treaty, and encourages the remaining signatories and other states to complete their ratification processes as soon as possible. Such a swift entry into force is in itself a great achievement. It reflects our joint commitment to reducing armed violence and the human suffering it causes. We particularly welcome the inclusion of a provision on gender-based violence, and emphasise the importance of translating this into practice on the ground.

As we strive for effective implementation of the ATT, we should learn from the valuable experience gained from the Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The facts and realities from the field continuously guide the implementation of these instruments. Norway strongly believes that the First Conference of States Parties of the ATT should be held sooner rather than later, and that the states parties should adopt rules of procedure that will ensure effective decision-making.

Mr. Chair,

The 2010 NPT Review Conference recognised the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would ensue from any use of nuclear weapons, and reaffirmed the need for all states at all times to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law. The broad and active participation of a large number of states and the wide range of stakeholders at the Oslo and Nayarit conferences reflects the recognition that the catastrophic effects of a nuclear detonation makes this an issue of concern and relevance to us all.

It has become clear that no state or international body would be able to address, in any meaningful way, the immediate humanitarian emergency that would follow a nuclear detonation. No existing national or international emergency system would be able to provide adequate assistance to the victims.
While the number of nuclear weapons in the world has been significantly reduced since the end of the Cold War, some 17,000 weapons remain. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the humanitarian perspective will continue to be relevant. This perspective has renewed interest in the disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the discussions on the humanitarian impact have brought to light the risks and consequences of continued collective inaction.

Austria’s initiative to host a conference in Vienna will facilitate further discussion of the humanitarian perspective as we prepare for the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We encourage all countries, both nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states, to participate constructively in this important discussion.

Mr. Chair,

The humanitarian approach to disarmament and non-proliferation is seeking to achieve progress within the NPT Review Cycle. Norway attaches great importance to the full implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the last NPT Review Conference. At the same time, Norway remains a staunch supporter of bilateral disarmament measures such as the New START.

Multilateralism in nuclear disarmament remains, however, plagued by a long-lasting impasse.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to point out that the UN Disarmament Commission, established for the purpose of conducting substantive deliberations and making recommendations, has not been able to
deliver for over a decade. We question the continued need for the UNDC, but if it is continued, it has to be made more practical, more focussed and more relevant. UNDC sessions should be shorter and concentrate on one or two topics to be decided by the UN General Assembly. The same applies to the Conference on Disarmament, which is an outdated forum that has not delivered since 1996.

There can be no doubt that our overall objective is to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. We may, however, disagree on the way to reach this common goal. Pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we should continue our efforts to reduce the role of this category of weapons in security policies and doctrines. We should consolidate existing – and support new – nuclear weapons free zones, in particular in the Middle East. It is therefore of great importance that the conference on a zone free of MWD in the Middle East is held before the 2015 Review Conference. It is also vital that the process of reducing the existing arsenals of nuclear weapons continues and accelerates.

Bearing in mind our Alliance commitments, Norway will continue to participate actively through established forums in working towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

A world free of nuclear weapons will not be possible without a credible non-proliferation regime.

We must all do our part to implement and further strengthen non-proliferation obligations. This includes implementing the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards and Additional Protocol. The IAEA must be fully equipped to carry out its crucial non-proliferation work, also financially. Norway has, on a number of occasions, expressed deep concern over the outstanding proliferation challenges, such as those posed by Iran, Syria and DPRK. A
political solution to these issues would greatly strengthen the non-proliferation regime, as would an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Norway took part in the successful Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague this March, where we confirmed our commitment to nuclear security. We look forward to continuing this important process in Washington in 2016. We must keep up our efforts to secure all nuclear material. We must significantly reduce the use of highly enriched uranium, in both civilian and military applications. And we must strengthen multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle. The IAEA is the keystone of international nuclear security cooperation and, through common efforts, we can succeed in strengthening global security.

We must also ensure that our verification systems are robust enough to instil the necessary confidence in the integrity of both non-proliferation and disarmament processes, based on the principles of verifiability, irreversibility and transparency.

For a number of years, the UK and Norway have cooperated at expert level on exploring the technical and procedural challenges that would be associated with a nuclear disarmament verification regime. The purpose of this cooperation is to demonstrate that nuclear weapon state and non-nuclear weapon state collaboration in nuclear disarmament verification is both possible and necessary.

Mr. Chair,

The Chemical Weapons Convention has already created a very strong disarmament and non-proliferation norm. The award of last year’s Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW was appropriate and well earned. During the course of just 17 years, more than 82% of the world’s declared stocks of chemical weapons have been destroyed. Last year's terrible chemical weapons
attacks in Syria shocked an entire world. This resulted in UN Security Council resolution 2118 and Syria joining the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The international mission to remove and destruct Syria's chemical weapons programme was of great importance. In the midst of a brutal civil war, the international community, including Norway and Denmark, succeeded in removing Syria's declared chemical weapons in a peaceful manner. Never before has a country's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction been removed in this way. And thanks to this huge international effort and commitment, these weapons can no longer be used against the civilian population or fall into the hands of militant groups.

However, we are concerned about reports of possible discrepancies and omissions to Syria's chemical weapons declaration. We are also concerned about this year's chlorine gas attacks. These grave issues must be investigated and fully resolved.

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) is a cornerstone of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Biotechnology is a rapidly evolving science, which means that ambitious and forward-looking initiatives are needed to strengthen the BTWC. We believe states parties should focus on the areas where consensus is possible, and on pragmatic steps that can strengthen the Convention in a constructive manner. We would therefore argue that priority should be given to improved national implementation and universalisation of the Convention. The universality, transparency and functionality of existing confidence-building measures should also be improved, and the practical collaboration between the scientific and disarmament communities should be strengthened. Norway would welcome the resumption of deliberations on a protocol to the BTWC, but considers other initiatives to be equally important, and more likely to be successful in the immediate term.
Mr. Chair,

The development of cyberspace has provided us with opportunities that would have been unimaginable only 10–15 years ago. At the same time, cyber threats from state and non-state actors alike pose serious challenges to almost every nation, and constitute a potential risk to international peace and security. We have to face these new challenges, and a clear and common understanding between states on how existing international law apply in the digital domain is imperative and will benefit us all as in order to have a digital world based on peace, transparency and equal opportunity. A just, stable and peaceful digital order can only be achieved if it is based on international law. Largely thanks to the excellent work carried out in the United Nations Government Group of Experts, UNGGE, it is now universally recognised that existing international law also applies to cyberspace. However, further work is needed on the implementation of these principles. Norway welcomes the continued efforts of the UNGGE on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of information security.

To conclude, Mr. Chair,

My delegation expects the First Committee to reaffirm the norms against chemical and biological weapons, and to provide guidance on how to bring nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation forward. We would also like to reiterate our strong support for the ATT.

Thank you.