As this is the first time I am taking the floor in a formal session, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you Mr Chairman on your assumption of the role and assure you of my delegation's full support for your work.

Let me also align the UK with the statement made in this cluster on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Mr Chairman

It is good to hear so many states reaffirming their support for the UN's disarmament machinery and their willingness to revitalise and reinvigorate its component bodies. The final document of the First Special Session on Disarmament is clear that disarmament is the responsibility of all States.

The UK adds its voice to those reaffirming their support for the Machinery and shares the objective of its revitalisation.

The mandates of the bodies of the UN's disarmament machinery as envisaged by the First Special Session on Disarmament are as relevant today as they were in 1978. If the disarmament machinery is to be truly effective, however, it does need to be revitalised.

All three fora, Disarmament Commission, First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament are mutually reinforcing and we believe a reinvigoration of any one of the bodies will have a positive effect on the others.

We have the ideal opportunity now, at the end of the Disarmament Commission's current three-year cycle, not only to refresh its agenda but also to consider changes to its working practices.

In this regard, we welcome the excellent work instigated by the Disarmament Commission's Chair, Ambassador Drobnjak. We fully support these efforts aimed at revitalising the Commission and hope to see them reflected in a consensus resolution here later this month.

If the Disarmament Commission can discuss new agenda items or emerging threats to international security it can help revitalise the First Committee.
To make space for consideration of new items on the programme of the First Committee, we might identify more resolutions that could be moved to a biennial or triennial basis. Resolutions dealt with in this way are no more or less important than the resolutions considered annually.

We share the frustration of others that the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to agree a Programme of Work since 1996. The UK applauds the leadership of Australia and Ecuador and their efforts in the Informal Working Group to find a way to overcome this impasse.

Our priority at the CD remains the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty. Ceasing the production of the fissile material required to make nuclear weapons is an obvious and necessary step towards disarmament.

Mr Chairman

The final document of SSOD1 goes on to say that “While disarmament is the responsibility of all States, the nuclear weapon states have the primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament and, together with other militarily significant states, for halting and reversing the arms race.”

The UK recognises its particular responsibilities as a nuclear weapon state.

The lack of movement in the disarmament machinery has not been used by the UK as an excuse to stop taking steps towards disarmament. The UK remains committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and, in the last five years we have announced further reductions in warhead numbers, and revised and strengthened our negative security assurances.

We have reducing our holdings of nuclear weapons from around 460 warheads to a commitment now of 180 warheads by the mid-2020s.

Within the disarmament machinery, the UK was pleased this year to have taken on the role of co-ordinator of the informal discussions on item three of the CD’s agenda, Preventing an Arms Race in Outer Space, and so make a small contribution aimed at getting the CD back to work.

Mr Chairman
The paragraph of the final document of SSOD1 that I have been quoting from, and which identifies that the nuclear weapon states have the primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament, concludes by saying it is important to secure the active participation of the nuclear weapon states.

The UN Disarmament Machinery provides the necessary framework for doing just that. But the right Machinery cannot deliver on its own. The other indispensable ingredient for further reductions in nuclear weapons is trust between the nuclear weapons states.

Trust is an essential requirement for security, and for further disarmament. It is the lubricant for the UN Disarmament Machinery, and the machinery, however good, cannot function properly without it.

The United Kingdom will continue to support the UN Disarmament Machinery, and will continue to work to build the trust between the nuclear weapons states which will permit the Machinery to deliver the further reductions in nuclear weapons that we seek.

Thank you