Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor of taking the floor on behalf of Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria and my own country Switzerland, on the issue of decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, or De-alerting.

Since 2007, our countries have been tabling the De-alerting resolution which calls for practical steps to address the significant number of nuclear weapons that remain at high levels of alert.

We are deeply concerned that today almost 2,000 warheads are ready for use within a matter of minutes. Such high alert levels multiply the risks posed by nuclear weapons. They increase the probability of an inadvertent, erroneous, unauthorized or precipitated launch. They represent an unacceptable danger to humanity as even a small percentage of these warheads, if used, could kill millions of people. In the context of heightened international tensions, awareness of the risks associated with such postures is all the more important.

Mr. Chairman,

The growing international focus on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons has served to highlight the threat that the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons poses to the survival of humanity and the urgent necessity of nuclear disarmament, and specifically reducing alert levels.

Lowering the operational readiness of nuclear-weapon systems has been recognized as being a key part of the nuclear disarmament process. De-alerting is a long standing, unfulfilled NPT disarmament commitment, agreed as part of the 13 practical steps of 2000. It also constitutes an “effective measure” for the purposes of Article VI of the NPT. De-alerting is thus a prime example of a necessary, reasonable and practical disarmament step and progress in this area of NPT implementation would strengthen the NPT’s credibility.
Action in this regard would also result in a significant nuclear disarmament dividend through a reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in nuclear doctrines.

We acknowledge and welcome the progress that has been made in the past, including lowering the level of operational readiness of non-strategic nuclear weapons and the standing down of strategic bombers.

These steps highlight the fact that de-alerting is possible and that technical and political challenges can be met. However, more can and should be done to address the disproportionately high levels of alert of many nuclear weapons today.

In this context, we are encouraged by the numerous calls made by former high ranking officers from nuclear-weapon States in support of reducing the level of operational readiness of nuclear weapons – their expert testimony that de-alerting is not only feasible but also necessary surely increases the volume of our call to action. Our countries welcome the steady increased in support, from non-nuclear and States possessing nuclear weapons alike, that the resolution has garnered since it was first submitted in 2007.

Mr. Chairman,

It is against this background that the De-alerting group will table this year the resolution entitled Decreasing the Operational Readiness of Nuclear Weapons.

The main object of the resolution remains unchanged in calling for further practical steps to be taken to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert status.

This year’s resolution takes note of the references to operational readiness in reports of the nuclear-weapon States to the 3rd Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It also looks forward to the issue being addressed further at the 2015 Review Conference.

This growing support demonstrates our collective commitment to a diminishing role for nuclear weapons and our recognition that reducing alert levels is an important interim step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. We look forward to continued strong backing for the resolution this year and invite all States to support it. We would like to recall that this resolution is open for Co-sponsorship.

Thank you.