Statement of H.E. Ambassador Fábio Marzano
Vice-Minister for Sovereignty and Citizenship of Brazil

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me first to congratulate you, Ambassador Carlos Foradori, on your role in the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are confident that you will successfully carry out the work of the Conference, and of this High-level Segment, in view of your well-known diplomatic skills as the Permanent Representative of Argentina. Through you, I would also like to congratulate the members of the P-6 for the coordinated and exemplary action that they have been carrying out this year.

Mr. President,

When Brazil acceded to the Non-proliferation Treaty, we took into account its potential to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons after the ending of the Cold War era. The Treaty’s legislative approval in Brazil took place, bearing in mind that the nuclear arms race was terminating, and the world was moving towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Up to now, those expectations have not been fulfilled.
In this sense, we emphasize that the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 cannot be understood as a warrant for the perennial possession of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty’s Review Conferences of 2000 and 2010 succeeded in achieving positive outcomes and offering hope that real progress was underway. The bleak scenario that ensued in the last five years should not prevent us from adopting a bold view while approaching the upcoming conference in less than three months. The 2020 Review Conference should be an opportunity for reaffirming and moving beyond previous commitments agreed upon, and that should be our measurement of success. The implementation of Art. VI by Nuclear Weapons States is a “sine qua non” condition for the future of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Brazil views two other legally binding instruments as important means on the road map towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Firstly, we call upon countries of Annex II to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. A Treaty with more than a quarter-century of existence cannot remain in legal limbo. The high costs of maintaining the CTBT Organization weight over developing countries and may become to be seen as meaningless, apart from the fact that the CTBT is essentially an uncompleted non-proliferation treaty, as it does not ban subcritical testing.

Brazil believes that halting the enrichment of fissile material for nuclear weapons and explosive devices may achieve feeble results or no results at all, in the pursuit of the goal of nuclear disarmament, if we do not address the
issue of existing stockpiles. Yet, as I stated in this body last year, we are ready to shift gear on a Fissile Material Treaty. In order to bridge positions, we reaffirm our 2010 proposal to the CD on a framework agreement approach to fissile materials, underpinned by two protocols dealing, respectively, with existing and future stocks.

Brazil actively supported the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which is an unambiguous statement of the intolerable humanitarian consequences of any nuclear weapon use or detonation. The Prohibition Treaty complements and is consistent with the NPT, and it is the ultimate expression of all commitments in the architecture of nuclear disarmament. The entering into force of the TPNW will soon constitute the new gold standard on nuclear disarmament.

Furthermore, the proponents of the Prohibition Treaty already abide by obligations equivalent in scope as non-nuclear weapons states under the NPT and within the umbrella of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone agreements to which they are parties. We are waiting for nuclear weapons states, and possessor states, to provide, in exchange, corresponding full negative security assurances, without conditions or interpretative clauses, to the effect that we will not be threatened or attacked with nuclear weapons.

Implementing nuclear agreements presents the practical challenges of verification. The Brazilian expert to the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification submitted a working paper on the establishment of a Group of Scientific and Technical Experts (GSTE) on
Nuclear Disarmament Verification. The new edition of a GGE on nuclear disarmament verification will also consider the GSTE. The proposal draws inspiration from the Group of Scientific Experts under the CD between 1976 and 1996 to technically preparing for negotiations on the CTBT. It is important to recall that that Group of Scientific Experts was active in a time when there was no hope of a breakthrough agreement on banning nuclear testing, but its work was fundamental in establishing the foundations for the successful negotiation of the CTBT.

Brazil views the GSTE on nuclear disarmament verification as feasible, proliferation-resistant, and instrumental in providing a valuable contribution to the overall goal of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President,

Under your presidency, the Argentinean presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, I have the honor to bring to the foreground the Argentine-Brazilian Agency for Accounting and Control (ABACC). The treaty creating ABACC in 1991 predated our countries accession to the NPT and laid the ground for very close cooperation. To extra-regional observers, the partnership we have today may be seem as smooth and even obvious, but that vision is unaware of the necessary transparency effort to overcome past mistrust and occasional tensions in most of the twentieth century. Therefore, we have every reason to be proud of ABACC, as well as to believe that our institutional experience could inspire, mutatis mutandi, other regions in subduing regional tensions involving a nuclear component.
Mr. President,

Brazil would like to reiterate its support for the UN Secretary General’s Disarmament Agenda as a notable initiative to recognize, assess, and respond to what we can all agree is a deteriorating international security agenda. It is a contribution that brings needed encouragement and guidance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

We must reactivate the core mandate of the Conference, namely negotiating legally binding instruments that can prevent the world from slipping into a scenario of high-risk, high-stake strategic confrontation. The flawed idea of permanent and unaccountable military build-up, led by nuclear arsenal modernization and their means of delivery cannot achieve strategic stability.

Mr. President,

Science and technology are breaking new ground in terms of what is militarily possible. It challenges our post-world war notions of compliance with an ethical and moral bottom line built under the aegis of the United Nations to protect humanity from self-destruction, as reflected in the common acquis of International Humanitarian Law and the International Law of Human Rights.

Last week, Brazil organized the Rio Seminar on Autonomous Weapons Systems, when we had the pleasure of receiving participants representing governments, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector, to openly
discuss in an informal setting one of the most ethically challenging disarmament issues derived from the weaponization of emerging technologies. We have confidence that the seminar in Rio, as well as other similar events this year, will have a positive impact on the discussions in the Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS.

The discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems have been achieving a considerable level of maturity. In the coming months, we should labor in the GGE with a view of launching negotiations during the next Review Conference of the Convention on Conventional Weapons, in 2021, of a legally binding instrument in the form of an additional protocol.

Brazil believes in preventing the weaponization of outer space, and that space should remain the sole territory of peaceful and scientific exploration for the common good of humankind.

Outer space is fragile, and the realization of ant-satellite tests can threaten its sustainability. Brazil took note with appreciation of an opening statement in the initial session of the CD, referring to the idea of negotiating a legally binding instrument prohibiting the carrying out of ant-satellite weapons testing. We are open to discussing further features of that idea.

Digitalization of all aspects of modern life places cybersecurity issues at the heart of contemporary security challenges. A Brazilian diplomat is chairing the GGE on Advancing responsible State behavior in cyberspace, which
the second session is taking place this same week, here in Geneva. We are also actively participating in the Open-Ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of ICTs in the Context of International Security. We are deeply engaged in these initiatives and expect that both of them will achieve successful outcomes.

The potential weaponization of the Life Sciences looms as a hazard that would violate one of the greatest taboos in warfare, namely the use of disease as a weapon. Since the Ebola outbreak, in 2014, the international community is acutely aware of the nefarious humanitarian consequences of a hypothetical bioweapon. The Biological Weapons Convention is an almost universal treaty, prohibits biological weapons, and no state-party of the BWC currently develops a bioweapon program. Nevertheless, the scientific and technological revolution happening in the field of the Life Sciences requires a comprehensive strengthening and actualization of the Convention through additional legally binding instruments.

Mr. President,

The disarmament machinery as it stands has allowed for progress, albeit at a pace far slower than necessary. It seems incapable, however, of keeping up with the challenges a world order in rapid transformation. With regard to the CD, we firmly believe that we should improve its functioning so that the Conference can fulfill its core mandate, negotiating legally binding instruments.

Finally Mr. President,
We commend the tireless efforts of the Algerian presidency and we are fully supportive of your endeavors, Mr. President, in moving the CD towards a negotiation mode.

The range of topics to be negotiated is well known and has been long established. It includes the entry into force of the CTBT, a treaty on fissile materials for nuclear weapons, the review of nuclear military doctrines, particularly with regard to negative security assurances, progress on other fronts such as transparency, confidence-building and verification, and, ultimately, a comprehensive legal framework to eliminate nuclear weapons.

These initiatives have been for many years on the CD’s Agenda awaiting an opportunity to be effectively considered, and it is our collective responsibility to pursue them with the utmost resolve.

Thank you, Mr. President.