Mr President,

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Disarmament and arms control are accorded a high priority in the government programme of Finland. Strengthening the international rules-based order and its institutions are cornerstones of our foreign policy.

Therefore, I am very pleased to address the Conference on Disarmament. The CD has a unique role as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament matters.

Your work is as important as it is demanding. Agreeing on disarmament that increases safety and security for all is an immense task. National security interests are too often seen as competing, and lack of genuine dialogue has led to increasing polarisation.

The global security environment is becoming increasingly challenging. This heightens the need for international rules-based cooperation. We need a strong focus on common interests in pursuit of disarmament and arms control. The CD is a key forum, and you are key players in this effort.

Mr President,

In a few days, we will celebrate 50 years since the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The NPT is a remarkable success story. It has effectively curbed the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It provides an internationally recognised basis for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Not least, the NPT contains a legally binding commitment to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith.

Some countries deem it necessary to develop and retain nuclear weapons for their security. At the same time, the very same weapons pose an existential threat to every nation and every human being on our planet. This is a paradox we must overcome.

Our ultimate goal is a world free of nuclear weapons. This can only be achieved through a process that provides increased security for all. This requires a good faith effort to build trust through dialogue, while exercising restraint in rhetoric and postures. In particular, there is
an urgent need for enhanced dialogue on strategic stability amongst the nuclear weapons states.

The Russian Federation and the United States, possessing by far the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons, must take the lead in reviving the much-needed dialogue. While we applaud the Russian and American efforts so far, it is indispensable that they continue spearheading nuclear arms control and disarmament. The extension of the New START treaty would be a concrete demonstration of this much-needed leadership.

We recognise the need to involve all nuclear weapons possessors in nuclear arms control. Non-strategic nuclear weapons need to be urgently included in discussions too. The sooner New START is extended, the faster the discussion on new and additional arms control measures can begin. Such an extension would also provide a strong impetus to the NPT process.

We know from history that in a tense security climate, escalation can happen very fast. Tools to increase transparency and trust and to manage crises are vital to reduce the risk of nuclear weapon use.

Finland has been active in searching for practical means to reduce nuclear risks. We are committed to facilitate concrete efforts at risk reduction also in the future.

Mr President,

The NPT Review Conference will commence in two months. The most important message coming from the conference must be to confirm the common determination of all nations that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

Past NPT commitments remain valid and form the basis for making further progress in accomplishing the aims of the Treaty.

For the future, we need a forward-looking outcome covering all three pillars of the Treaty. This should include:

- Deepening discussion on nuclear doctrines and declaratory policies with the aim to limit the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. This is key to increase trust and confidence in order to advance nuclear disarmament.

- Engaging in structured dialogue to assess, minimise and address nuclear risks. This includes measures aiming at preventing crises, extending decision-times in crisis, and measures to minimise potential vulnerabilities emerging from disruptive technologies and cyber threats.

- Addressing the challenges posed by the entanglement of conventional and nuclear weapons systems and taking measures to reverse such development. Addressing the most destabilising weapon systems and arrangements is a priority.
• Strengthening Negative Security Assurances. This would alleviate concerns and increase security of non-nuclear-weapons states, without weakening deterrence.

• Supporting ongoing efforts to develop multilateral nuclear disarmament verification capabilities. Multilateral participation in verification is important for confidence in nuclear disarmament measures and their irreversibility.

Mr President,

It has always been difficult to agree on an outcome in NPT Review Conferences. The upcoming Review Conference will be no exception. However, the real test of the value and success of the NPT is the real-life implementation of the norms set by the Treaty. The NPT and its States Parties have been successful so far, but we can, and we must, do better still.

We can – and we shall – have a successful Review Conference with a forward-looking outcome. It takes hard work and a strong will to compromise to overcome differences. It takes your diplomatic skill, distinguished Ambassadors. You will be key players in New York in May. It is a great challenge. It is a great opportunity.

Let us all shoulder our responsibility and make the NPT Review Conference a success.

Thank you.