Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania* align themselves with this statement.

We congratulate Algeria on assuming the first Presidency of the 2020 session of the Conference on Disarmament and wish you and other P6 members – Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh and Belarus – every success in your endeavours.

You have set an example for the incoming presidencies on how to co-operate for a common good and we very much hope that your early and well-coordinated preparations will bring more consistency, continuity and predictability to our work.

We also wish to thank the UN Secretary-General, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and the Secretary-General of the CD for their support for the CD’s work.

The European Union has one central aim for this year’s CD session: to reinvigorate substantive work towards concrete negotiations which have not been possible in this forum for much too long.

The CD remains the world’s single multilateral disarmament negotiating body and its continued relevance is of utmost importance for the EU. The CD should fulfil its crucial function to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties and it could also elaborate other instruments and norms, such as guidelines and codes of conduct. Strong political will, increased trust and flexibility are urgently required from all CD members, if we are to break the impasse and bring the CD back on track.

*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
We appreciate that in recent months, many delegations have underlined their commitment to bringing the CD back on track. We count on delegations to put their words into deeds and demonstrate flexibility, as we all embark on a new year in the Conference.

We are confident that despite the known challenges, we must advance technical, substantive work and broaden areas of agreement so that we are better prepared to start negotiations at an early date. As a first step, we should take a fresh look at the organization of our work with due respect to the rules of procedure. The concept of a balanced and comprehensive Programme of Work should not act as a barrier to beginning substantive work on core items on the CD’s agenda. As highlighted by the Netherlands in its Working Paper during the 2019 session, we cannot afford to have protracted procedural debates on the organisation of work at the beginning of each session, but should rather opt for a more pragmatic approach to schedule our activities, similar to the more distant past.

While the EU and its Member States are ready to launch substantive work on all core items, we reiterate that our longstanding priority in the Conference on Disarmament is to immediately commence negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and we support starting such negotiations in accordance with the document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. We recall that substantial progress has already been made on possible definitions, scope, verification, and legal and institutional arrangements of such a treaty, thanks to the efforts of the Group of Governmental Experts and the High Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group. We encourage P6 and all CD members to devote attention to these issues in 2020.

In the meantime, we call on all States possessing nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We welcome the action by the two European nuclear weapon States, which have declared relevant moratoria and dismantled or converted such facilities, and call on others to follow suit.

We also call on all States that have not yet done so, in particular the remaining Annex II States, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) without further delay. Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, the EU calls on all States to uphold their moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, and to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

The EU continues to actively support the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament which currently comprises only 65 members. Since the last expansion in 2002, 27 countries, including 12 EU Member States, are waiting to become CD members, and the number of observer States is growing each year, reaching a new long term high in 2019. We would like to propose that a special coordinator be appointed to lead substantive consultations and lay out possible scenarios for the consideration of CD members on the long overdue expansion of membership. The EU deeply regrets and is very concerned that this morning consensus was prevented on the observership request of Cyprus, an EU Member State, contrary to the usual practice and we strongly urge the concerned CD member to reconsider its position in this regard.
Promoting gender equality is an important horizontal priority for the EU. We will therefore continue to pay attention to active and equal participation of women and men in all decision-making and action, including in various disarmament fora. We should also engage youth and explore further opportunities to discuss with civil society, academia, industry and research institutions within the Conference on Disarmament.

Promoting effective multilateralism and rules-based global governance is the cornerstone of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy. The EU will continue to do its utmost to protect the integrity of the rules-based international system which is key to our collective security.

In 2020, the EU will particularly focus on promoting a successful outcome of the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On its 50th anniversary, we must celebrate and reinforce the NPT as a key multilateral instrument for international peace, security and stability, promote its universalisation and enhance its implementation. The EU strongly supports all three pillars of the NPT and will continue to promote comprehensive, balanced, and full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan. We stress the need to implement all obligations and commitments under the NPT, including the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of Article VI. We recall that all States Parties have committed to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

The EU contributes actively to the NPT review process and provides support to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the NPT Bureau for the organisation of regional and thematic seminars, which should help to build common ground on the way to the 2020 Review Conference. An EU-funded thematic seminar on nuclear disarmament will take place in Geneva from 29 to 30 January 2020.

Bearing in mind the increasingly severe and complex security environment, we stress the need to preserve and further advance general arms control and disarmament processes and call for further progress on all aspects of disarmament to enhance global security. We attach the highest importance to the New START Treaty and would welcome early and active dialogue on its future post-2021 and on other arms control arrangements. We are deeply concerned over the continued international and regional tensions and the deterioration of the security environment, which could affect the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and spark a dangerous spiral into an arms race, conflict and violence. We welcome and encourage further initiatives and processes at international and regional levels to restore dialogue and trust and promote transparency and confidence-building measures, such as risk reduction including strategic risk reduction measures.

The EU remains deeply committed to verifiable treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament. We call on all parties to avoid steps that could erode the existing international instruments and to faithfully comply with their obligations.

The EU is grateful to the UN Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for their continued engagement on disarmament and non-proliferation issues and their
interest in the CD. Ahead of this 75th anniversary year of the UN, the EU has become the biggest supporter of the UN Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament, lending its support for a total of 10 actions. They are

- Action 4: Bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force;

- Action 7: Conclude a treaty banning fissile materials for nuclear weapons;

- Action 8: Develop nuclear disarmament verification;

- Action 9: Restore respect for the global norm against chemical weapons;

- Action 10: Readiness to investigate alleged use of biological weapons;

- Action 22: Secure excessive and poorly maintained stockpiles;

- Action 34: Ensure the financial stability of treaty support mechanisms;

- Action 35: Increase engagement with regional organisations; and

- Actions 36-37: Full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the EU continues to provide substantive funding to the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on a process of confidence-building leading to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, the EU has called for urgent de-escalation and maximum restraint to maintain regional stability and global security. We stress our continued support for the preservation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2231. We regret the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. We are deeply concerned at Iran’s latest announcements, in particular of 5 January 2020 and previous steps in reduction of its nuclear commitments which could have serious consequences, and call on Iran to return to full compliance with the JCPOA without delay.

The EU will continue to address all proliferation crises in a resolute way. The repeated ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), in violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, continue to undermine international work for building trust and establishing lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, free of nuclear weapons. We call on the DPRK to return to meaningful negotiations and in the meantime stick to a moratorium on nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches, refrain from further provocations, and take concrete and credible steps towards building trust and confidence and abandoning all its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, as required by the UN Security Council. Until the DPRK takes concrete actions, we will continue to strictly enforce existing sanctions. We urge the DPRK to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay and to return to compliance with its obligations under the NPT and the IAEA safeguards.
Thank you, Mr. President