Mr. President:

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) has not agreed, approved, and implemented its program of work in more than 25 years. This is five times worse than the paralysis of the security council during the cold war due to the crisis on the Korean peninsula!

During this time, in a very creative simulation exercise, the CD keeps the delegations in Geneva busy, but does not work to fulfill its mandate. As the President of France recently said when referring to NATO, CD suffers from “brain death” (est atteinte de mort cérébrale). And its members continue to keep it in artificial life, instead of letting nature do its job and give it the dignified burial it deserves for its past achievements.

The inefficiency of the working methods of the CD has several elements, among which are the monthly rotation of the presidency, which does not have the opportunity to agree anything at all, the practice of negotiating ad nauseam the program of work that is never adopted, and the lack of participation of civil society, something that is no longer compatible to the practices of the United Nations. This year, the CD could not even make a technical-linguistic adjustment of its procedures to make them neutral from a gender perspective.

But, above all, all decisions, both substantive and procedural, are made by the arbitrary rule of consensus, one of the worst practices of contemporary multilateralism.

Consensus must be an aspiration. But when it is not achieved, the golden rule of democracy is the vote. Many major multilateral conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea or the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, have been adopted by vote. Also, when CD was paralyzed by the dictatorship of consensus, we presented the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban
Treaty (CTBT) text negotiated in Geneva here in the General Assembly, and it was adopted by a vote.

Similarly, every year that the CD is focused on “informal deliberations” it is in fact usurping functions of the Disarmament Commission (UNDC). As if that was not enough, the UNDC was unable to agree on recommendations between 1999 and 2017, and inexplicably, it has not been convened since 2018.

The narrative of which we are complicit in this simulation undertaking is that the paralysis has to do with the complex international security situation. If that is so, how can it be explained that other fora do work and generate results, even of a binding nature, among the same States that are represented on the CD? Schizophrenia? NO. Simulation and dishonesty. There is no other way to say it.

Nevertheless, States truly committed to the cause of disarmament have been able to find alternative ways. We have achieved 4 multilateral treaties related to weapons outside the CD: the Ottawa Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines, the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). All in force.

We are still in time to prevent what happened in Geneva in the 1930s, when a Conference on Disarmament linked to the League of Nations simulated negotiations, while a World War was brewing.

Therefore, we call on the First Committee to assess the need to convene a new special session of the General Assembly dedicated to disarmament (SSOD4), or any other mechanism for reflection and rethinking about the institutional conceptualization of forums that have shown us they are not on the level of the demands of the public conscience of the 21st century.

Thank you.