As we initiate the debates on the review process for Cluster 1 issues today, we are aware that there is a clear demand from the global civil society as well as from the international community as a whole, who expect concrete progress towards disarmament that is irreversible, verifiable and transparent.

Argentina is neither removed from nor indifferent to this claim. We share it, based on our historical position for general and complete disarmament, where nuclear disarmament is a priority, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT. In this way, and in the same line we have presented in every forum and negotiation Argentina has been a part of, we reaffirm, once again, our commitment to work in a constructive manner, seeking the widest consensus, in order to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons.

Our flexibility to allow the adoption of a programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament, the foremost multilateral negotiations forum, demonstrates that commitment. We must avoid the marginalization of this forum and, to that end, we are open to discuss and reflect on the elaboration of innovative proposals that respect the security concerns of all Member States.

Argentina is part of a region that has been historically at the forefront when it comes to disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is not a by chance that Latin America and the Caribbean established the first nuclear weapon free zone (NWFZ) in a densely populated region. The contribution to peace and security at the regional and global level made by the Tlatelolco Treaty –for the past 51 years- has been real and effective, not just by strengthening the commitment of our countries to disarmament and non-proliferation but also through its Protocols, which bind the nuclear weapon counties to refrain from violating our status as a nuclear weapon free zone. Such commitments must be honored and strengthened, and we encourage the revision of the interpretative declarations that condition the object and the aim of Tlatelolco.

More recently, the Latin American and Caribbean States Community (CELAC) has expressed its commitment to the consolidation of our region as a Peace Zone in Declarations at the top political level, reaffirming to that end the promotion of nuclear disarmament that is general, complete and non-discriminatory as a priority goal. The commitment of CELAC with nuclear disarmament is clear, and has been expressed in Special Declarations at each of its Summits of Heads of State and Government.

From our viewpoint, the general and complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the best guarantee against its use or the threat of its use, therefore avoiding the irreparable humanitarian consequences attached to their use. This concern has been announced in this setting, precisely at the 2015 Review Conference, where over 150 countries co-sponsored the Joint Declaration on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons.

Faced with this situation and given the current scenario, we cannot but underline our apprehension because of the situation we face concerning nuclear disarmament. We hope we can count, in this review cycle, with the decisive commitment of the nuclear-weapon States (NWS) to fulfill their obligations under the NPT, particularly with regard to article VI.

We have before us the opportunity offered by the review process so that the international community can join its efforts to facilitate fruitful dialogue and negotiation among NWS and non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWS).

Mr. Chairman,

The demand of the international community seeking progress towards multilateral negotiations in nuclear disarmament needs to be articulated in a constructive and synergetic manner.

We must avoid at all cost establishing artificial legal priorities or hierarchies.

Each non-proliferation or disarmament instrument includes provisions that seek mutual complementarity and strengthening.
For Argentina, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the clearest and most urgent pending goal.

Twenty years after its opening for signature, it is clear to all that this instrument is an effective and verifiable contribution to the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. The enforcement of the unilateral moratoriums by nuclear-weapons-armed countries -with the reprehensible exception of North Korea- is enough to confirm the nature of CTBT as jus cogens international law.

The 2020 Review Conference offers a superb opportunity to make a universal call for the entry into force of this Treaty.

We are aware also that the efforts by the international community to reach a world free of nuclear weapons, though its prohibition and total elimination have not started from scratch. Argentina believes that Article VI of the NPT does not only refer to the obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons, through general and complete disarmament, but that this obligation implies in itself the concept of a prohibition. Therefore, we must not undermine the validity and binding nature that Article VI of NPT has always had, to this moment, in working towards that end.

In the conviction that it is possible to advance in the elimination of nuclear weapons, our steps towards that end must be sustained in solid control system, to ensure they are verifiable, irreversible and transparent.

In the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, our commitments -whether political, legal or other- are of relative value unless they are underpinned by a solid verification system that is neutral, professional and robust. It is in the benefit and interest of all Parties -and in particular of developing states aspiring to take full advantage of the potential of nuclear energy for sustainable energy- to do so in a manner that is not only beyond reproach but also guaranteed and certified by an international inspectorate. When it comes to non-proliferation and potential hostile or non-peaceful uses of nuclear materials, verification is paramount.

To this end, it is necessary to develop adequate and sufficient capabilities. Initiatives such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) and the Expert Group on "Nuclear Disarmament Verification" in the United Nations system are welcome step towards our goals, together with the discussions on verification that are expected to continue within the FMCT Expert Group.

Argentina is strongly committed to these initiatives, in the understanding that disarmament demands practical contributions at the technical level that can allow us to move forward in a prompt and decisive manner, as soon as new disarmament measures take place.

Mr. Chairman,

It is important to continue to move forward, in a sustained manner, in the reduction of nuclear arsenals with a view to its total elimination, and we also have a task before us in the field of prevention of an arms race in outer space, for example, as well as in the progress regarding the negative assurances agreements.

No-first-use commitments would also be welcome within the nuclear disarmament debate.

At the same time, the obligations to reduce nuclear arsenals must be accompanied by measures that focus in the reduction and elimination of the risks associated to the use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

The NPT establishes a balance of obligations between NWS and NNWS, which in no way legitimates or assumes the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons, yet it should not be alleged by NNWS to free themselves of their non-proliferation obligations, either.

The international nuclear nonproliferation regime faces a great challenge with the situation created by the DPRK. The development of their military nuclear program and the tests that DPRK has made constitute a serious threat to the stability of the NPT regime, as well as a real and present threat to international peace and security. We regret, once again, these developments and reiterate our strong condemnation.

This situation compels us to reiterate, once more, the importance and the urgency for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty to enter into force. This instrument needs to be in force so it can become the legal grounds to condemn nuclear testing under international law and even to call for on-site inspections and take concrete steps on the basis of the information obtained. We call on those States that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty, especially those whose ratification is indispensable for the CTBT to enter into force. It is hard to understand the rationale of a gradual approach to disarmament that does not include the prompt entry into force of the CTBT.

Mr. Chairman,
Regarding the specific issue of security assurances, the clauses of the NPT offer a balance of rights and duties for all Parties. In this perspective, the non-nuclear-weapon States will not reach our full security as long as the NWS do not move forward in the acceptance of effective international agreements guaranteeing that such weapons will not be used against us nor its use be threatened, especially when us, countries with no nuclear weapons, are complying strictly and truly with our non-proliferation obligations.

Since the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 255(1968), the NWS have recognized the need to draft credible commitments that offer some kind of guarantee to those who have voluntarily renounced the possession of such weapons. The guarantee that those States who do have nuclear weapons will not commit the absolute excess of using them against the unarmed. It is hard to understand why, fifty years later, such commitment has not been incorporated in a simple and clear legal instrument yet. There are no exceptions or interpretations that can nullify the commitment made.

The demand for a legally-binding instrument that offers security assurances can contribute to restore confidence, but cannot be understood as replacing the obligations undertaken by Nuclear Weapon States to destroy their arsenals.

At the same time, the possible adoption of an Agreement granting security assurances should not undermine those assurances already made by NWS in the framework of the Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zones and those in the resolutions of the Security Council.

Mr. Chairman,

On our path to the Review Conference 2020, important challenges lie before us.

It is necessary to move forward in a balanced way in all three pillars of the Treaty, on the basis of the commitments already undertaken. The dimension of nuclear energy development for peaceful uses plays against the security aspects - not only non-proliferation, but also the belief that the path towards a much safer world involves the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Argentina favors an approach that is ambitious, but with our feet on the ground – that seeks tirelessly to make progress in disarmament, but avoids fruitless debates or rhetoric duels that actually do nothing to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Thank you.