Thank you, Chairperson,

South Africa wishes to associate itself with the statement by the Non-Aligned Movement on the issue of security assurances.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to place on record that a call for negative security assurances should not be perceived as any sort of recognition for the continued possession of nuclear weapons. It is, instead, a pragmatic, interim and practical measure aimed at strengthening the non-proliferation regime and the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

South Africa’s view on the provision of legally-binding security assurances to States that have foregone the nuclear weapons option under the NPT is based on the belief that it would not only enhance the security of non-nuclear-weapon States under the Treaty, but also strengthen the non-proliferation norm. South Africa firmly believes that the continued possession of nuclear weapons increases the possibility that these weapons could be used, or fall into the hands of terrorists. As we have stated many times in the past, the only complete defence against the threat posed by these weapons remains their complete elimination and the assurance that they will never be produced again.

Chairperson,

Because the NPT is the primary international legal instrument under which the non-nuclear-weapon States have foregone the nuclear weapons option, it follows that security assurances should be provided under the NPT. The granting of legally-binding security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States under the NPT would fulfil one of the NPT’s core bargains to States that have foresworn the nuclear-weapons option. The provision of security assurances within the context of the NPT would not only provide a benefit to the NPT non-nuclear-weapon States, but could also serve as an incentive to those who remain outside the Treaty.
Chairperson,

It is argued by some that the security assurances granted under United Nations Security Council Resolution 984 of 1995 are adequate for the purposes of the non-nuclear-weapon States. In addition, it is argued that the existing nuclear-weapon free zone treaties provide a forum for the nuclear-weapon States to reinforce existing security assurances. However, the 1996 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion and the 2000 Review Conference Document make it clear that security assurances should be granted in the context of the NPT. Consequently, the qualified assurances provided under nuclear weapon-free zone treaties are not sufficient.

Together with the Members of the Non-Aligned Movement, South Africa has therefore often expressed the conviction that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, efforts should be pursued for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States.

Chairperson,

It is a well-known fact that the "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament" adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference recognised that steps need to be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons which should take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument. Furthermore, the Final Documents of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences reflect the agreement of States Parties that unequivocal and legally-binding security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States to the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT would strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Chairperson,

In South Africa's view, it is not acceptable for non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT to continue to be concerned and threatened by the possible use of nuclear weapons against them. Nevertheless, these concerns persist.

The nuclear-weapon States claim to be committed to the politically-binding security assurances that have been granted to the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT. If this is indeed the case, it begs the question as to why they still continue to oppose the conclusion of legally-binding assurances. This is an issue that is long overdue. A legally-binding instrument that would provide security assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT would strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and confirm the importance and role of the NPT.

I thank you.