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Opening statement by H. E. Mauro Vieira

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Madam Chairperson,

I congratulate you on your assumption as Chair of the Disarmament Commission, as well as the other members of the Bureau. Please be assured of the full support of my delegation.

Let me start by congratulating all States that in a spirit of compromise worked to build consensus last year to adopt recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, ending 18 years of paralysis in this Commission. Let's keep this positive example in mind for the negotiations that are about to commence.

A new triennial cycle of the UNDC is starting this year and will present its conclusions just before the next Review Conference of the Non Proliferation Treaty. We shall take advantage of this window of opportunity and of the universal membership of this Commission to better explore all possible recommendations in the field of disarmament.

Madam Chairperson,

Allow me to turn to your proposed agenda for this session. Regarding the first item, we can all agree that nuclear disarmament is a longstanding objective of the international community.

From their inception onwards, the indiscriminate power of nuclear weapons and the existential threat they pose to humanity have motivated several initiatives and proposals to pursue their elimination. This issue was the subject of the first General Assembly Resolution, which affirmed the objective of the "elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". It is regrettable that, after more than seventy years, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain unresolved issues on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission.

I wish to reiterate Brazil's conviction that the only insurance against the dangers and risks posed by the possible use of nuclear weapons, by intent or accident, is their total elimination in a transparent, irreversible and verifiable manner and within a multilaterally agreed timeframe.

Brazil believes that the Commission could focus its deliberations on three important aspects pertaining to nuclear disarmament: transparency, irreversibility and verification. Discussions on verification could build upon, inter alia, the principles of disarmament verification agreed to in 1988 by the UNDC and discussions taking place in different fora such as the GGE on nuclear disarmament verification that will start this year.

Brazil is also firmly committed to the objective of nuclear non-proliferation as a party to the NPT. In our view, the key to the sustainability of the non-proliferation regime lies in combating the incentives to proliferate. Any approach that is focused exclusively on non-proliferation while ignoring necessary progress in nuclear disarmament is illogical.

The continued existence of nuclear weapons increase tensions throughout the world, foster suspicion and hinder cooperation among States. The limited reductions made thus far are, unfortunately, offset by the continued modernization and qualitative improvement of nuclear arsenals which just contribute to the worsening of the international security environment.

It challenges common sense to imagine that strategic stability can be promoted through permanent and unaccountable military build-up, led by nuclear arsenal modernization and their means of delivery. It certainly does not make us feel safer; quite the contrary. It is therefore important that the Commission considers the issue of modernization of nuclear arsenals in its debates during this triennial cycle.

Madam Chair,

The elimination of nuclear weapons is not only a legal obligation contracted by NPTs States parties; It is a moral and ethical imperative to the entire international community.

Bearing this in mind, Brazil actively participated in the process that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We are extremely proud of and encouraged by the results achieved.

The Prohibition Treaty, besides complementing the NPT, levels the normative playing field for all Weapons of Mass Destruction, on the basis of which further steps towards their accountable destruction and elimination can be taken.

It represents very concrete, objective and successful action by almost two thirds of the UN membership to fix a legal gap that allowed for the existence of normative ambivalence regarding the acceptability of the most destructive and inhumane of all Weapons of Mass Destruction.

We especially welcome the active support to the Ban Treaty negotiation from Nobel Peace laureate ICAN and the 400-plus civil society entities ICAN represents from all over the world. We welcome their support, which was central for the successful outcome of the negotiations.

Madam Chair,

Regarding the second and new agenda item, there could be no better moment to bring into the consideration of this Commission the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space. We have witnessed in recent years a series of breakthroughs in space exploration of far-reaching implications.

Brazil believes that the outer space should remain an environment of peaceful and scientific exploration for the common good of humankind.

We participate, on a regular basis, in confidence building mechanisms at the multilateral level, such as the UN GGE on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities that debated ways to avoid the militarization and weaponization of outer space.

We welcomed the GGE's final report, adopted by consensus, in particular its emphasis on international cooperation between both spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations.

That notwithstanding, Brazil is of the view that those measures cannot replace normative developments in the field of outer space, including, inter alia, a legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We would like to highlight, in particular, the GGE's conclusion that voluntary political measures can form the basis for consideration of concepts and proposals for legally binding obligations.

Hence, Brazil supports discussions on PAROS in this Commission with the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space. Possible recommendations on the topic from a universal multilateral body would be of great value to the newly created subsidiary body on PAROS in the conference on disarmament and to the GGE established by General Assembly Resolution 72/250. Brazil expresses its expectation that those different dialogue mechanisms will bring about concrete results to this longstanding issue.

Madam Chair,

The multilateral disarmament machinery has played a crucial role in fostering dialogue and confidence among States, thus contributing to the promotion of peace and security. Regarding specifically the UNDC, to name only a few important outcomes of past sessions, we would underscore the previously mentioned 1988 principles on verification, which constitute a fundamental element of any disarmament treaty; the 1996 guidelines for international arms transfers; the 1999 guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones; and the 2017 recommendations on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

The current global security situation is certainly complex and a plethora of challenges are looming. However, this Commission has been able to agree on specific issues and adopt recommendations during critical times. Let's make it happen once again.

Thank you.