Statement by Poland on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime

As we celebrate today the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime and will celebrate on December 9 the 70th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide we pay tribute to the Victims of the crime of crimes and express our gratitude to all that keep their memory alive. We would also like to recall Rafał Lemkin, a Polish jurist of Jewish descent, who gave “the crime without a name” the name of genocide and worked tirelessly towards the creation and adoption of the Convention, prevention of this crime and commemoration of its Victims.

We recognize the need for continued efforts aimed at prevention of genocide, the need for carrying on Lemkin’s mission. That is why Poland, a party to the Convention, supports the United Nations Secretary-General’s and the Special Adviser’s on the Prevention of Genocide appeal for its universal ratification. We were privileged to host the Special Adviser during this year’s 29. Informal Meeting of Legal Advisers and provide him a platform to address directly the Legal Advisers of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the United Nations Member States also in this regard. And we reiterate the call for States that are not yet party to the Convention to ratify or accede to it.

As every year we commemorated the victims of the Holocaust. This year the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz, paid also a special tribute to the victims of another genocide – against the Tutsi in Rwanda. During his visit to Kigali he presented the second Rafał Lemkin International Award to Aegis Trust – an organization helping Victims, documenting crimes, highlighting threats and providing educating and training based on peace values. The award is aimed at honouring those who continue Lemkin’s work to commemorate genocide Victims and prevent this crime. We will continue our efforts in this regard and will support others who undertake them.

Also this year Poland had additional opportunities in that respect, as a non-permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council in the years 2018-2019, that has selected solidarity, responsibility and commitment as the guiding values, and strengthening respect for international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law, as one of the priorities of its term. Through the year we strived to demonstrate our commitment to these values and towards that aim, consistent with the aim of today’s International Day, both in the daily work at the Council and by presenting our own initiatives therein. During our presidency in May we organized an open debate, chaired by the President of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Andrzej Duda, on upholding international law within the context of the maintenance of the international peace and security, and another debate, chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Jacek Czaputowicz, on protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Many other human rights-centered initiatives followed.

On December 10, 2018, one day after the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in partnership with Belgium, Cote D’Ivoire, Germany, Kuwait and Peru and in close cooperation with the UN Office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect as well as the UN Office of Legal Affairs we will organize an Arria-formula meeting of the United Nations Security Council Members, including the incoming ones, on raising effectiveness of atrocity crimes prevention. We will remain committed to genocide and other atrocity crimes prevention, in the spirit of solidarity, also during the second year of our Security Council term and beyond, recognizing that the pledge of “never again” requires mobilization and responsible, sustained action.