This year, the Disarmament Commission is beginning its substantive work in a very challenging international environment. There are growing tensions in many parts of the world. There persist disagreements and rivalries among States. Deadly conflicts continue unabated in various regions. Threats of terrorism and cyberattacks add instability and insecurity throughout the planet.

In the shadow of such a security climate, multilateral disarmament has continued to face serious challenges, with increasing signs of decay and decline. Lacking mutual trust and confidence, States are retreating from disarmament negotiations. The 2015 NPT Review Conference concluded without agreement on a substantive outcome document. Last fall, the First Committee held its session in a highly polarized atmosphere, with many resolutions adopted with deeply divisive votes.

In this context, the Disarmament Commission has a critical role to play this year in restoring trust among States and rebuilding confidence in multilateral disarmament. The disarmament machinery provides a mechanism for promoting dialogue and building confidence among States. As the specialized, deliberative subsidiary body of the disarmament machinery with universal membership, the Disarmament Commission allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues. Through such deliberations, Member States can engage in constructive dialogue and free-wheeling discussions with a view to finding common ground for advancing the disarmament agenda.

Fortunately, the 2016 Disarmament Commission begins its work on the heels of the first substantive session of the Open-Ended Working Group on a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, also known as SSOD-IV. I was heartened that this Working Group held very productive discussions in a constructive atmosphere. The active participation of many delegations during the weeklong meeting has not only raised expectations for the prospects for agreement on a possible SSOD-IV, but has also created some much needed positive energy in the area of disarmament.

I sincerely hope that this constructive atmosphere will also prevail in our work in the coming three weeks, and create momentum for revitalizing the work of the Commission, as well as that of the disarmament machinery as a whole.

It has become a cliché that the disarmament machinery, particularly the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission, is perpetually paralyzed. It has been 20 years since the Conference on Disarmament last negotiated a multilateral treaty. It has been 17 years since the Disarmament Commission last adopted guidelines or recommendations.
However, I wish to remind you that during the period of 1979 to 1999, the Commission adopted, by consensus, guidelines and recommendations on various disarmament issues for sixteen times.

This is why I am convinced that the Disarmament Commission will be able to agree on substantive outcomes during the current three-year cycle. So I wish you all the very best as you commence your work toward this goal. I earnestly hope that we will have a turning point for multilateral disarmament soon.