Views of Switzerland on Nuclear Disarmament Verification, in response to the request of the UN Secretary-General contained in Note Verbale 16-2017/NDV

1. Switzerland was one of the lead sponsors of A/Res/71/67 because it has long supported verifiability – next to irreversibility and transparency – as a core principle of nuclear disarmament, and because it considers Nuclear Disarmament Verification (NDV) as essential in view of the credible reduction or elimination of nuclear weapons. Switzerland wishes to underline that, pending additional agreements mandating the verifiable destruction/elimination of nuclear warheads/arsenals, and irrespective of different views on how nuclear disarmament can be achieved, NDV instruments, techniques, and methods should be advanced systematically.

2. States possessing nuclear weapons bear a special responsibility to verifiably reduce and ultimately eliminate their arsenals. However, all States share the responsibility to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. This will, inter alia, require one or more multilateral agreements, backed by a strong, multilateral system of verification. Accordingly, NNWS, in cooperation with possessing States, have a role to play in the identification and development of credible, practical and effective multilateral NDV measures.

3. While nuclear and non-nuclear verification measures have already been developed and are implemented daily/globally, additional efforts must be made to develop the set of measures needed to verify. Such NDV measures must allow the parties to relevant agreement(s) to gain reassurance of compliance by other parties with their commitments and hence increase mutual trust and confidence.

4. Developing and agreeing on credible, efficient and at the same time cost-effective multilateral NDV measures is likely to be technically complex and militarily and politically sensitive. In this build-up, States could benefit from the relevant experience by CTBTO, OPCW, IAEA or OSCE, and from work done by States (such as USA-RUS; Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership), civil society, and academic and other specialist institutions. Experiences made in the International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) are highly relevant.

5. Switzerland is convinced that the GGE NDV can make an important contribution to advancing nuclear disarmament in general and multilateral NDV in particular. In this regard, the GGE should serve to anchor existing expertise on NDV (whether resulting from ongoing treaty implementation or from broader partnerships such as IPNDV) in the UN system, without duplicating existing efforts. The GGE should identify NDV challenges, and how to overcome them, and identify the levels of information required to ensure the credibility of multilateral verification. Finally, the GGE should make practical recommendations for follow-up work, within UNGA, CD, UNDC or by UNIDIR or any other appropriate forum.