Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me also thank you for your report and for your efforts throughout the year on this matter. Your letters and efforts have been important in trying to secure overdue contributions. My delegation largely agrees with the conclusions in your report, but we wish to provide some additional remarks.

The decisions we took last year to stabilize the BWC’s precarious financial situation were an important accomplishment. It’s largely due to these decisions that we haven’t had to cancel any meetings this year due to lack of funds, and that members of the Implementation Support Unit are once again on twelve-month contracts. I realize that may not sound exciting, but I assure you that if you’ve been limping along on three- or four- or five-month contracts, it’s probably fairly exciting.

One of the most effective steps we took was also one of the simplest: early invoicing to facilitate early payment. Over the last ten years, the BWC has typically collected a little over fifty percent of assessed contributions in the first quarter of the calendar year. This year, by March 31, that figure was seventy-seven percent, a huge improvement. We can clearly see that this was a measure that made a real difference.

Another measure we adopted was the establishment of a Working Capital Fund. The Working Capital Fund, to be sure, does not help us with the problem of nonpayment; but it does provide a critical buffer to shield the ISU and our meetings of experts from the effects of late payments. The report notes that the fund was not drawn down this year. This is true, but that does not mean it was not used: the financial guarantee provided by the fund allowed the UN to issue longer those contracts to the ISU.

Unfortunately, despite the generous contributions of several States Parties, the Fund is still well below the required level. Currently, the substantial credit owed to the United States, with our consent, continues to serve as a de facto buffer fund for the BWC. This cannot continue over the longer term; it is simply not sustainable, either politically or financially.

From this, we can conclude that the steps we took last December have clearly helped – there is no question about it. However, it is also clear that they do not solve the underlying problems of late and non-payment of contributions, which have not really improved at all:

- Last year, at the end of November, 71 States Parties – about 40 percent – owed money to the BWC. 54 of them owed arrears for prior years. The total amount outstanding was over $236,000.
This year, at the same time, 79 States Parties owed money to the BWC, with 52 in arrears for prior years. If anything, things are going in the wrong direction. Although we are in a better position to manage it, the core problem has not been resolved.

Your report mentions a collection rate for last year of 98 percent. That is true IF you calculate the collection rate at the time the accounts were closed in late August of this year. The collection rate at the end of the year, however, is what matters in terms of determining how much of our programme can be implemented in 2021. That figure was 94.4 percent. That is worse than the preceding year. So there has been no improvement on this front either.

In short, Mr. Chairman, we still have a problem. We must follow up on the measures we adopted last year if we want to be able to continue our work.

In paragraph 21 (a) of the report of last year’s meeting of States Parties, we agreed by consensus that “the payment of assessed contributions by States Parties in a timely manner and in full is necessarily of the utmost importance for the financial sustainability of the Convention and the implementation of the Programme of Work.” We also agreed that “States Parties shall honor their obligations under the Convention,” and urged them to pay their arrears as soon as possible. That’s the key message from all of this: we must simply pay our bills.

Thank you.