Mr Chairman,
Taking the floor for the first time, I would like to join previous speakers in thanking you for the manner in which you are conducting our crucial meetings this year. We thank you and the ISU for your continuous hard work in preparing the upcoming Review Conference. You can count on the full support and cooperation of the Swiss delegation in the fulfilment of your duties.
Particularly, I would like to thank you for providing the opportunity to address issues of a cross-cutting nature. As indicated by the numerous working papers on those issues submitted to the preparatory process, they are of central importance to States Parties and the Review Conference.

Mr Chairman,
Switzerland welcomes the achievements made by the past Intersessional Processes (ISP). Meetings held under this framework provided for substantive discussions and the adoption of “common understandings”, as provided for in the mandate of the 2006 and 2011 Review Conferences.
While we welcome the debates and exchanges that have taken place in this context, experiences over the last four years have shown the limitations of the current process. We believe that this ISP was not optimal in ensuring that, in line with its mandate, “effective action” could in fact be taken. We believe that the ISP could be significantly improved in a way to make the BWC more action-oriented.
In this regard, we note that a number of working papers have been submitted on the issue of the ISP, identifying possible options to improve upon the existing process. We believe that the ISP would benefit from more focused and in-depth discussions on key issues. The proposals from different States Parties of transforming the annual Meeting of Experts into more dedicated, governmental experts-led meetings on key topics – including but not limited to the issue of reviewing developments in science and technology – points in the right direction and should be considered further. Further discussions will be necessary to identify and agree on the key issues under the convention that need to be addressed under such a reformed process.

Another consideration concerns decision-making. The Review Conference would remain the overall decision-making body of the process. To ensure effective action and a timely response to developments, Switzerland supports proposals that aim at providing the Meeting of States Parties with the authority to take decisions on specific, clearly-defined issues beyond those of procedural nature, and believes that this matter should be seriously considered by States Parties.

Mr Chairman,

Speaking of the ISP, Switzerland particularly believes that an undertaking as complex as an S&T review is extremely difficult to carry out in the existing intersessional format and the limited time available. We believe that a more focused and dedicated process is necessary in this area, in particular because S&T underpins all articles of the convention, including Articles I, III, IV, V and X.

Following the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee, Switzerland invited States Parties to provide written feedback on its working papers as well as those submitted by other States Parties on the issue of an S&T review process under the Convention, in order to take this matter forward and start identifying possible elements of convergence.

Switzerland is grateful to those States Parties that have provided feedback as well as to those that elaborated and propose concrete S&T review models. These contributions are very useful and important for identifying common ground and move towards a shared view.

The replies that we received indicate that there are commonalities of views on many elements. For instance, it seems clear that any type of S&T review process has to be responsive to the needs of States Parties and be fully under their authority, even though further work is still required to establish the precise modalities and interaction procedures.

One particular area where further convergence is needed concerns the question of the composition of the group undertaking the review, and to a lesser degree the interconnected issue of participation funding. States Parties have underlined the need for participation in any type of S&T review process to be diverse and representative as well as inclusive. They have proposed different options to meet these requirements that Switzerland has sought to compile and synthesize in working paper 16 submitted to this meeting. We hope that this working paper will contribute to our col-
lective reflection on this issue and aid in furthering our efforts towards converging views.

Mr Chairman,

Closely interlinked with all of these questions, in particular the one on the future design of the intersessional process, is the issue of the renewal of the BWC Implementation Support Unit’s (ISU) mandate. In our view, the ISU has consistently proven its merit in supporting our collective goal and assisting States Parties in implementing the Convention. As we look at establishing a more robust and intensive ISP, Switzerland stands ready to support the renewal and strengthening of the ISU’s mandate. During our proceedings, we will certainly have to keep the issue of updating the ISU’s mandate and staff size under review.

Mr Chairman,

To conclude, Switzerland believes that it is important to have consultation processes in place on the key issues between the conclusion of the Preparatory Committee and the Review Conference in November in order to exchange views, discuss divergences, and explore and identify possible avenues for consensus. We stand ready to support any practical proposal to this effect from you, Mr Chairman. Such a process would be needed to ensure that we come as well prepared as possible to the Review Conference, and also because we have to move forward on certain issues before we can take up others. For instance, we first need to broadly define the form of the next ISP before we can take an informed decision on the mandate and size of the ISU.

Thank you.