Mr. President,

I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Belgium. Thank you for convening this annual debate of the General Assembly on Security Council Reform.

Thank you also for your letter of November 10th in which you announce the appointment of H.E. Ambassador Courtenay Rattray as the new chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. We wish Ambassador Rattray all the best in his new position. Ambassador Rattray : thank you for taking up this challenge. We have full confidence in your ability to successfully lead these intergovernmental negotiations.
The Netherlands and Belgium would also like to pay special tribute to our previous Chair, Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan, who skillfully, and for many years, steered the work of these intergovernmental negotiations. Ambassador Tanin: thank you, and thanks to your entire team, for all the hard work of the past years.

Mr. President,

It is fair to say that we did a lot of fruitful and important work during the last session of the General Assembly. It started with the initiative of your predecessor, the former President of the General Assembly John Ashe, to create an Advisory Group of the PGA on Security Council Reform. This Advisory Group produced a non-paper, which, in our view, offers a very useful tool for our discussions and which has been used as such by many delegations.

Under the leadership of Ambassador Tanin we also held debates on each of the five clusters of Security Council reform and a sixth one on cross-cutting issues. Last summer, at the request of the former PGA, Ambassador Tanin shared with us his personal assessment of our work, and added thought-provoking recommendations on the way forward.

Mr. President,

For years now, we have scrutinized Security Council reform from all possible angles. The positions are well known: it is clear where opinions diverge, but it is even clearer where large consensuses can be found. No one is waiting for another year of repetitive debates, with only slight variations. This year, perhaps more than ever before, business as usual is no longer an option.

So let us build on the results of last year and take the process one step further. We all know how to do this. It has been said many times before and Ambassador Tanin mentioned it in his recommendations: just as in any other process at the
General Assembly, we need to engage in a genuine give-and-take. We need to start real negotiations. And we need to do it on the basis of a text, a text that will be a starting point, not a foregone conclusion, for text-based negotiations will allow us ultimately to converge rather than diverge, regardless of what text is used as a basis. However, we cannot make text-based negotiations conditional upon a pre-existing consensus on the text to be used: this would be equivalent to calling for the solution to be agreed before we actually begin to address the problem.

Mr. President,

We count on your determination and guidance to create a new momentum, because the ultimate goal of our endeavor remains as important as ever before: a more effective, transparent, accountable and representative Security Council, which reflects the geopolitical realities of the 21st century and contributes to a more credible United Nations and a reinforced international system.

As always, the Netherlands and Belgium stand ready to fully support both you and the Chair of our working group.

I thank you.