Dear minister, dignitaries, friends

We are here to discuss the humanitarian consequences of a weapon we believe belongs to the old world, to a cold war climate. A weapon that has less utility and value than people may think. A weapon associated with high risk of being used. A weapon we know will have devastating consequences if used.

The risk of full nuclear war between super powers, or total extermination may be small today. The risk of a nuclear detonation is, however, larger than ever. More nations have acquired the weapons or are working to develop them. The more people that have a finger on the button, the larger the chances of someone pushing it. The risk increases in parallel with the temptation of non-state actors or terrorists wanting to buy, steal or sabotage such weapons. An accident may also be a relevant scenario.

We have hesitated for too long to talk about such risks. But denial cannot continue to be our only defence. The idea that
we have permitted ourselves to develop weapons that may destroy us all is surrealistic and irrational. It is naive to believe that nuclear weapons have a utility that outweighs their enormous risks. We now have to talk about what the consequences will be if the unspeakable happens.

- I stand here today, representing one out of many organisations that have a strong sense that this is the time for a new beginning.

- One reason for our optimism is the development of a humanitarian agenda on nuclear weapons. This conference will play a crucial role in increasing recognition of the unacceptable consequences that a detonation will have. And I am proud that it is my government that is the host of this historical event.

- Our optimism is also carried forward by a new generation. There is a new post cold war generation entering this debate, having less understanding for cold war deterrence logic and demanding an end to old time paradigms and a ban on nuclear weapons. The intelligence and determination of the civil society group which gathered over the week-end here in Oslo confirmed this.
• The impressive turnout of states here gives us added confidence. Your presence here sends a strong message that nuclear weapons are weapons of mass suffering and that preventing their use is the responsibility of everyone.

• My organisation the Norwegian People’s Aid will be heavily involved, together with our international ICAN partners, in the years to come in the reframing of the debate on nuclear weapons - and in demanding a ban as a real solution to the very real humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation.

• We, as civil society have an enormous room for power in world politics. We are many. We are determined. We are strong willed. And we are convinced of the solution.

• Nelson Mandela appealed to civil society when he came out of prison in apartheid South Africa in 1990. He said: we leave it on your shoulders to be watchdogs, keep us on the right track and assure a peaceful democratic future. We take that challenge and wish you a good conference.