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Statement by
The Delegation of the United States
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at the Thematic Debate on
“Other Disarmament Measures and International Security”
in the First Committee of the General Assembly
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Mr. Chairman, the United States Delegation takes the floor to underscore the contributions of effective verification and of full compliance with international agreements to the maintenance of international peace and security. We welcome the report of the Group of Government Experts (GGE) on “Verification in all Aspects,” and commend the Chair and the members of the GGE for tackling such a complex subject so well. It is especially noteworthy that such a diverse panel was able to achieve a forward-looking, consensus report that identifies and examines the opportunities, challenges, and constraints related to verification in all its aspects.

The GGE report on the role of verification makes clear that governments must consider many factors in determining whether (and, if so, when and in what manner) verification means and methods can contribute to enhancing confidence in compliance with international obligations. Our Delegation wishes to focus its remarks today on the question that most aptly is described as, “after detection of noncompliance, what?”

In the matter of compliance, as the GGE report underscores, there is growing international emphasis on full compliance by all states with their obligations, as well as growing realization of the importance of responding to noncompliance resolutely and in a timely fashion. Indeed, perhaps no issue today is more important than compliance, since, if parties to an agreement do not comply with its terms, the international security benefits of that agreement cannot be realized, and the very purpose of that agreement is placed into question.

The International Community Faces the Challenge of Compliance

Sadly, Mr. Chairman, the international community faces a tremendous challenge today in achieving and maintaining full compliance with international agreements. As we know all too well, too often, there is a penchant in some quarters to find excuses not to act in a timely and sufficiently forceful enough manner – or, regrettably, not to act at all – when a state chooses not to comply with its freely undertaken obligations to the
international community. The implications of such a disinclination to act are not lost—not on the violator, not on others who may be contemplating whether there are such compelling consequences to noncompliance that noncompliance is not an option, and not on states whose fundamental security depends on the compliance of their neighbors or partners.

Today, Iran's continued refusal to comply with its international non-proliferation obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), its IAEA Safeguards Agreement, and numerous Security Council resolutions makes clear, in stark terms, the difficulty of ensuring compliance. It also poses the question of what we can and should do about failure to comply.

The United States welcomes the various decisions taken by the IAEA Board of Governors and the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolutions 1737 and 1747, imposing Chapter VII sanctions on Iran. These demonstrate the unity of the international community on this issue. Our Government supports ongoing diplomatic efforts to encourage Iran to come into full compliance with its various international obligations. Should Iran continue to refuse to comply with its international obligations, however, the Security Council must move forward as soon as possible to adopt a third resolution under Chapter VII, imposing additional sanctions measures.

**Effecting Verification and Compliance**

Mr. Chairman, the United States views verification, compliance assessment, and compliance enforcement as critically interrelated. They are the three legs of a stool that cannot stand if one leg is removed. To put it simply: verification is designed to strengthen national and international security by providing the means and methods for the detection and deterrence of noncompliance. However, if detection has no consequences for the violator, then verification has no meaning, and deterrence is unachievable.

If arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament agreements and commitments are to support the security of all nations, then all nations must respond, on a national, regional, and international level, when confronted with noncompliance. Action by one state or by a group of states to encourage compliance, while highly welcome, very well may not be enough to induce a return to compliance.

Detecting a violation is not an end in itself, Mr. Chairman: it is a call to action by all. Without strict compliance, and without the concerted action of all parties to an agreement to insist upon strict compliance with it -- and to hold violators accountable for their actions -- the national security of all nations will erode, and global stability will be undermined.

Much of our diplomacy is focused on convincing states to take seriously their essential role in this effort. The international community must not acquiesce quietly in violations of fundamental obligations. To do so opens the door to rogue states, perhaps working in conjunction with non-state actors, to try to alter the strategic landscape to our collective detriment. Indeed, robust compliance enforcement by the international community is central to ensuring both the viability and the integrity of existing agreements, and to maintaining and strengthening international peace and security.

*Nuclear Risk Reduction Center*
Mr. Chairman, given that this session is devoted to "other disarmament measures," our Delegation also wishes briefly to call the attention of delegations to the activities of the United States Nuclear Risk Reduction Center. As we noted during the general debate on October 9, the United States and Russia just last month marked the 20th anniversary of the establishment of our respective Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers. The underlying premise of those centers was simple: confidence-building through information exchange to "avoid the risk of accidental nuclear war." For twenty years, the two Centers have helped make peace work. They have evolved from supporting a bilateral agreement in two languages to supporting almost twenty treaties and agreements, in six languages, with over fifty countries. We believe that the proven, two-decade-long record of the two Centers makes them an attractive tool for future requirements in transparency and confidence-building, and a model for other nations seeking improved communications and exchanges of information.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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