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Statement by
The U.S. Delegation
to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly
at the Thematic Debate on
“Disarmament Machinery”
in the First Committee of the General Assembly
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Mr. Chairman, the United States is committed to the employment, where appropriate, of multilateral approaches to solutions to the challenges of non-proliferation, the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and the control and elimination of other weapons that undermine international security.

Our consistent support for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons are clear evidence of this commitment.

We are pleased that 2007 is the 10th anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention, an important landmark in the history of disarmament and testimony to what effective “disarmament machinery” can be.

Mr. Chairman, the United States believes that signing weapons reduction treaties and making statements on non-proliferation are not enough. To be effective, disarmament machinery needs to be backed up by the political will not only to sign, but to implement substantive treaties. Nations must then have the political strength to comply with the treaties they sign. And the international community must insist on full compliance with international obligations.

UNGA First Committee

Mr. Chairman, this Committee embarked on a self-improvement program in 2004, and in 2005 we adopted a resolution outlining ways to improve our working methods. Last year some of those measures were implemented. But more can be done.

The thematic debates, such as we are engaged in now, have proved valuable in bringing focus to current issues, and helping the Committee to use its time more efficiently. However, in my delegation’s view, this body still has a tendency to function like a vehicle on “automatic pilot” far too often. We continue to see the same resolutions reintroduced in each session that have been adopted for many years, even when they do not still remain relevant to today’s international security situation.
My delegation strongly urges delegations to seriously reconsider the utility of reintroducing resolutions that have been introduced five or more times.

*Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (the NPT)*

Mr. Chairman, the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (the NPT) remains the most universal tool in the nonproliferation toolbox. The NPT, however, confronts tremendous challenges today, the most fundamental being a crisis of noncompliance. This challenge requires no elaboration, but it is worth emphasizing that this year was the first time that NPT States Parties began a Treaty review cycle since some of the worst of these problems first appeared.

- This is the first review cycle to have begun after public revelation of Iran’s two-decade-long clandestine nuclear program and after its nuclear weapons ambitions became clear to the international community;
- It is the first review cycle to have begun after the revelation of Libya’s secret nuclear weapons program, and we applaud Libya’s courageous decision to end it;
- It is the first review cycle to begin since public revelations about the A.Q. Khan nuclear smuggling network that supplied enrichment technology and nuclear weapons-related designs to both Libya and Iran;
- It is the first review cycle since North Korea announced its withdrawal from the Treaty, and since that country’s subsequent nuclear detonation. However, we are encouraged by recent actions taken by North Korea and by the collective determination of the 6-Parties in helping us get to this point;
- Finally, this is the first review cycle to have commenced since debates in NPT fora have come to focus upon what the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General has referred to as the "Achilles heel" of the regime -- the spread of technology giving more and more states the ability, if they choose to do so, to overcome the principal remaining technical hurdle to proliferation: producing fissile materials usable in nuclear weapons.

These developments present the NPT regime today with the most significant challenge it has ever faced: how to ensure its continued viability in the face of flagrant nonproliferation noncompliance. Failure to ensure NPT compliance undermines the bedrock objective of the NPT, which is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

*The Conference on Disarmament*

Mr. Chairman, no discussion of disarmament machinery is complete without a few words on the Conference on Disarmament. Under the invigorated leadership of the six Presidents of the 2007 session, the P-6, the CD held the most substantive discussions on issues related to disarmament in many years.

This year, with the exception of a handful of delegations, all members of the CD agreed on, or agreed not to prevent, consensus on a proposed Program of Work, the closest we have come to this goal in over 10 years.

The single most important issue that the CD can and should address is a legally binding ban on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and other
nuclear explosive devices. The international community has expressed a desire for such a treaty for decades, and it is irresponsible to delay further.

The United States made a conscious decision this year to go the extra mile to achieve consensus on a proposed Program of Work, and we urged all delegations to demonstrate the same flexibility. This year we saw the finish line, but could not quite cross it. We are resolved to do so next year.

UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC)

My delegation was pleased that the UNCD in 2006 broke its long stalemate over its agenda. In particular, we welcomed the inclusion of nonproliferation on the agenda as a concern equal to nuclear disarmament, as well as an item on the agenda related to improving the Commission's working methods.

Still, the UNDC damaged its credibility by selecting as a vice chairman – more than once – a state that is under heavy international scrutiny for its clandestine nuclear weapons program and the conduct of the last UNDC session unfortunately does not give reason for optimism that the current three-year study cycle will have a productive result.

Office of Disarmament Affairs (ODA)

My delegation would like to commend UNODA for its work in promoting implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1540. We have heard very encouraging results from regional seminars held in China, Ghana, Jordan and Peru.

The United States also appreciates the highly professional manner in which the Geneva branch of the UNODA serves the CD and, of course, we appreciate the support UNODA is providing us here in the First Committee.

Thank you.