Remarks by Ambassador Laura Kennedy
U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament
Delegation of the United States of America
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Thematic Debate: “Other Weapons of Mass Destruction”

Mr. Chairman,

The United States continues to make progress on nuclear arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament to advance President Obama’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons. As we work to end nuclear dangers, we are also very focused on actions to prevent chemical and biological agents and toxins from ever being used again as weapons by terrorists or states. Such weapons continue to pose a serious risk to the achievement of international peace and security. To that end, the Obama Administration remains firmly committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. They contribute significantly in our efforts to strengthen global arms control and nonproliferation in these areas.

Chemical Weapons Convention

The United States is encouraged by the progress and achievements already made under the CWC. We intend to do our part to build on that success by working closely with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) under its new Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey. In his address to the First Committee last week, he reminded all of us that, despite the achievements made to date, there is still much work to do. All of us must work together constructively in the multilateral, consensus-building spirit that the OPCW has fostered. The key
issues that must be addressed include the complete and verifiable destruction of chemical weapons, universal adherence, and full implementation. We must maintain an effective verification regime, encourage compliance with the Convention, and identify how best to address new challenges that derive from advances in science and technology.

Mr. Chairman, the United States recognizes that the destruction of existing chemical weapons is one of the fundamental goals of the Convention. The United States is fully committed to this goal. We continue to make substantial progress toward the complete destruction of our chemical weapons. We recently completed the destruction of 80 percent of the U.S. chemical weapons stockpile. At present we are on pace to reach the 90 percent mark by April 2012 and continue to examine all options to accelerate the destruction of the remaining 10 percent of our stockpile in a manner that is safe and environmentally sound. This work is difficult, dangerous, and much more technically complex and time-consuming than previously envisioned, but we remain committed to complete and verifiable destruction.

**Biological Weapons Convention**

Mr. Chairman, the Obama Administration also is firmly committed to the Biological Weapons Convention - the BWC. This commitment was reinforced last December by Under Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher when she addressed the Annual Meeting of States Parties in Geneva. She introduced the U.S. National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats, which is aimed at preventing biological weapons proliferation and terrorism, and emphasized the critical role of the BWC in these efforts. Our strategy rests upon the main principle of the BWC: that the use of biological weapons is “repugnant to the conscience of mankind.”
The biological weapons threat has evolved: life sciences knowledge and materials, intended for peaceful purposes, but with the potential for misuse, are more widely distributed and accessible than ever. The threat today comes not only from state-level programs, but also not-state actors. We need to approach the Biological Weapons Convention in this broader context.

The intersessional BWC meetings of the last few years were an important step in this direction. Governments must seize the opportunity presented by the upcoming BWC Review Conference in 2011 to build upon these successes through a reinvigorated, comprehensive work program to promote real action to counter the biological weapons threat. The United States believes that future work under the BWC should address three critical issues: building global capacity to combat infectious disease, regardless of cause; addressing the full range of today’s—and tomorrow’s—biological threats, including bioterrorism; and building confidence that States Parties are effectively implementing the provisions of the BWC and complying with their obligations.

Let me briefly elaborate on that last point: the United States wants to work with others to identify more effective ways to increase transparency, improve confidence-building measures, and engage in bilateral discussions about implementation and compliance in a collegial, constructive manner. As Assistant Secretary Rose Gottemoeller stressed at the beginning of this session, a traditional verification protocol would not have achieved meaningful verification or greater security. Rather, we hope to work with others to develop pragmatic forward-looking approaches that will truly enhance confidence that states are faithfully fulfilling their commitments.