Remarks by:

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Delegation of the United States of America to the First (Disarmament and International Security) Committee of the 65th United Nations General Assembly

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On behalf of the U.S. Delegation, I would like to welcome all of the delegates attending the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate the Chair and the members of the Bureau upon their elections, and pledge the support of the United States for your efforts to bring about a productive session of the First Committee.

Mr. Chairman, our Delegation welcomes this annual opportunity to present the views of our Government on how the international community can strengthen the global arms control and nonproliferation regime, and to hear the views of others. While we do not negotiate agreements here at the First Committee, we do share views on how to move forward productively the disarmament and international security agenda. At this year’s First Committee meeting, my delegation hopes to build on last year’s successful session, and the successful events since then. We seek a realistic outcome that will contribute to momentum for, and setting the direction of, the multilateral arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament agenda.

In the year since the last First Committee of the UN General Assembly was held much has taken place in the area of arms control and nonproliferation. When President Obama spoke in Prague in April 2009 about his vision of a world without nuclear weapons, he recognized the need to create the conditions to bring about such a world. The U.S. administration has been working diligently on this agenda, which includes stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, reducing nuclear arsenals, and securing nuclear materials.

In April 2010, the United States took three bold steps in the direction of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. The first step was the release of a Nuclear Posture Review that reduces the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and extends negative security assurances to all non-nuclear weapon states party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations. The second step was the signing of the New START Treaty with Russia that further reduces and limits the number of strategic arms on both sides, and renews U.S.-Russian leadership on nuclear issues. The third step was the Nuclear Security Summit which President Obama hosted in Washington, during which world leaders reached a consensus about the nature of the threat and agreed to a collective effort to secure nuclear material within four years.
These events were followed closely by the successful Review Conference of the NPT in May, which for the first time in ten years reached consensus agreement on a Final Document. This document and its comprehensive action plans, a first at an NPT Review Conference, will advance disarmament and nonproliferation efforts. The final document endorses a balanced approach to advance the three pillars of the regime: nuclear nonproliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and nuclear disarmament.

Regrettably, one area in which there has been no progress is in the Conference on Disarmament, where there is continued deadlock over a program of work that would launch negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), as well as substantive discussion of other disarmament topics. We regard this delay as unwarranted and out of step with the expectations of the wide majority of states seated here today. If we are serious about realizing a world without nuclear weapons, then we must start now by working on a treaty to end the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Advancing President Obama’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons has required us not just to change what business we do, but also how we do it. To that end, Secretary Clinton has reorganized the U.S. Department of State to better enable us to move this agenda forward.

As of October 1, the arms control and nonproliferation functions have been streamlined to focus more sharply our diplomatic resources on arms control in line with the President’s priorities. The Bureau that I lead is now the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance and we assume the lead on a number of arms control issues and fora, including representing the United States at the UNGA First Committee. I am delighted to be with you today in this new capacity and to share our views on fulfilling our President’s objectives – objectives that I believe are shared by many of you.

Today I would like to address the elements of the U.S. arms control and nonproliferation agenda. I will also discuss specific issues that this forum should address.

New START Treaty

Mr. Chairman, the New START Treaty was signed by President Obama and President Medvedev on April 8. Just over a month after that, the White House transmitted the Treaty to the United States Senate for its advice and consent to
ratification. On September 16, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended by a vote of 14 to 4 that the full Senate provide its advice and consent to U.S. ratification of the New START Treaty. The Administration seeks this vote as soon as possible.

The New START Treaty is a continuation of the international arms control and nonproliferation framework that the United States and the Soviet Union, later the Russian Federation, have worked hard to foster and strengthen for the last 50 years. It will provide ongoing transparency and predictability regarding the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals, while preserving our ability to maintain the strong nuclear deterrent that remains an essential element of U.S. national security and of the security of our partners and allies.

By adding greater stability and transparency to the relationship between the United States and Russia at lower levels of nuclear forces, we demonstrate that we are committed to full implementation of Article VI of the NPT. The New START Treaty will also set the stage for further progress in fulfilling the goals of the NPT and for expanding opportunities for enhancing strategic stability. We urge all other governments to help strengthen the global nuclear nonproliferation regime, and we hope that the UNGA will join with us in welcoming the significant achievement of New START.

CTBT

Delegations will recall that, at the NPT Review Conference, Secretary Clinton reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to ratify the CTBT. Ratification of the CTBT represents an essential step on the path toward a world without nuclear weapons. We urge other Annex II states to accelerate their own steps toward signature and ratification, bringing the Treaty’s entry into force closer to reality. We believe that the United States, and all states, will be safer when the test ban enters into force.

Much has changed since the U.S. Senate declined to provide its advice and consent to ratify the Treaty in 1999, which was based particularly on matters related to verifiability and stockpile reliability. Today, the International Monitoring System is more than 80 percent complete, and is already providing important data, including data on two announced nuclear tests in North Korea. Moreover, the implementation of the Stockpile Stewardship Program has enabled our scientists to understand better how to ensure the safety and security of these weapons today than during the era of explosive testing. And, the Administration
has commissioned a number of reports that will inform the Senate and the public’s assessment of the CTBT.

While the Administration prepares for U.S. Senate reconsideration of the Treaty, the United States has increased its level of participation in all of the activities of the CTBTO’s Preparatory Commission in preparing for the entry into force of the CTBT, especially with respect to the Treaty’s verification regime. U.S. technical experts are working closely with their counterparts from the Provisional Technical Secretariat in exploring joint efforts to improve the capabilities of the various networks of the global International Monitoring System and the functions of the International Data Centre in Vienna. After an absence of eight years, U.S. experts are fully engaged in advancing the effectiveness of the On-Site Inspection element of the verification regime, both from policy and technical perspectives. The United States has also assumed full responsibility for the costs of operating, maintaining, and sustaining the 31 stations of the International Monitoring System assigned by the Treaty to the United States. These actions demonstrate the commitment of the United States to prepare for the entry into force of this Treaty.

Let us now turn to two existing agreements, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, which factor significantly in our efforts to strengthen global arms control and nonproliferation.

**Chemical Weapons Convention**

The United States welcomes progress under the Chemical Weapons Convention, or CWC. We intend to build on that success and work with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), under the new Director General Ahmet Uzumcu of Turkey, with whom I have had the pleasure of sharing some of our key priorities. These priorities include the complete and verifiable destruction of our chemical weapons stockpile, universal adherence and implementation, maintaining an effective verification regime, encouraging compliance with the Convention, and identifying how best to address new and emerging chemical weapons challenges that derive from advances in science and technology.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that the United States continues to make substantial progress toward the complete destruction of our chemical weapons stockpile, recently completing the destruction of 78 percent of the U.S. CW stockpile, and is on pace to have 90 percent of our declared CW stockpile verifiably destroyed by April 2012.
Our Government currently is examining 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 are committed to complete destruction.

As part of our continuing efforts to be transparent and keep States Parties informed, the United States has hosted the Director-General of the OPCW and members of the Executive Council to our chemical weapons destruction facilities and members of the Executive Council will visit them again in March 2011.

**Biological Weapons Convention**

Mr. Chairman, the Obama Administration is committed to the Biological Weapons Convention, the BWC, a commitment reinforced last December, when Under Secretary of State Ellen Tauscher spoke before the Annual Meeting of States Parties to the BWC in Geneva. She introduced the U.S. National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats, aimed at preventing biological weapons proliferation and terrorism and emphasized the critical role of the BWC in these efforts. Our strategy for countering biological threats rests upon the main principle of the BWC: that the use of biological weapons is “repugnant to the conscience of mankind.” Our approach seeks to protect against the misuse of science to develop or use biological agents to cause harm.

The work of the BWC during its inter-sessional meetings has been valuable, and 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.

In so doing, the United States, together with other States Party, would like to identify more effective ways to increase transparency, improve confidence-building measures, and engage in more robust bilateral compliance discussions. A traditional verification protocol would not have achieved meaningful verification or greater security, and we hope to work with other States Party to improve on and encourage the development of national compliance “tool kits” through alternative means. We want to build on forward-looking ideas.
FMCT

Mr. Chairman, I would like to return to the topic of the Conference on Disarmament and the negotiation of a verifiable FMCT. I cannot hide the fact of our deep disappointment over the CD’s failure to act on the basis of the program of work adopted by consensus at the Conference in May 2009.

This mandate is repeated in the NPT Review Conference action plan, which calls on the CD to adopt a balanced program of work that includes mandates for negotiations on an FMCT and for “substantive discussions” on nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. And it was reinforced at the Secretary General’s recent High-Level Meeting on the CD and multilateral disarmament. Unfortunately, the will of the majority has been frustrated by at least one state not willing to allow FMCT negotiations to proceed in the CD.

It remains our strong preference to negotiate FMCT in the CD. However, after well over a decade of inaction in Geneva, patience is running out for many states, including the United States. If efforts to start negotiations in the CD continue to stall, then those governments that wish to negotiate an FMCT will have to consider other options for moving this process forward.

In his concluding remarks to the High Level Meeting, UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon noted “the broad agreement on the need to immediately start such negotiations,” and that CD Members “have a responsibility to rise to the expectations of the international community.” We share his view that the Work Program agreed by the CD in 2009 represents the most common denominator, and that it be adopted for the 2011 work program at the first CD plenary in January.

The United States supports the Secretary General’s initiative, and we will continue to support international efforts to identify a way forward for consensus-based FMCT negotiations to begin early next year in Geneva.

Mr. Chairman, it will be important for this year’s session of the First Committee to build on the hard-won consensus that the NPT Review Conference achieved last May and keep our eyes on one of its key recommendations: the immediate opening of FMCT negotiations. To that end, governments will have opportunities to propose ways to end the stalemate that has gripped the CD for over a decade, and build on the recent High Level Meeting.
Indeed, our month-long First Committee session provides ample opportunity for governments to discuss not just the CD or an FMCT, but all issues pertaining to the maintenance of international peace and security. To build on the NPT consensus, the First Committee ideally will focus on issues on which there is international agreement, or on which national differences have narrowed. This calls for a pragmatic step-by-step approach rather than the impractical leap of seeking to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention or the pointless calls for convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, for which there is no international consensus. We welcome the Secretary General’s thoughtful proposal for the Advisory Board to make a thorough study of the broader arms control machinery.

Space Policy

Mr. Chairman, before I conclude I would like to make note of a few additional issues. In late June, the new U.S. national space policy was released by the Obama Administration. This policy reaffirms a commitment by the United States to cooperate with other nations to maintain the freedom of space and thus to enhance the welfare of humankind. The policy recognizes that all nations have the right to use and explore space, but with this right also comes responsibility. We therefore call on all nations to work together to adopt approaches for responsible activity in space to preserve this right for the benefit of future generations.

Next Steps

With regard to next steps in nuclear arms control, I note that the New START Treaty represents a transition from the previous treaty regime, developed during the Cold War, to the present day. The Obama Administration is committed to the negotiation of deeper nuclear arms reductions. As President Obama confirmed in Prague when he signed the Treaty with President Medvedev, the United States will seek to include reductions in U.S. and Russian non-strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons in future discussions. Such reductions will introduce new challenges. Maintaining stability and verifiability of such reductions may require new approaches and new technologies. This is something that we hope to explore with the other nuclear weapon states.

Finally, let me say that the United States welcomes the French announcement at the High Level Meeting that they will host a meeting in Paris of the five nuclear weapon states early next spring. We fully support this meeting as part of efforts to encourage transparency and cooperation among the five.
Last year’s Conference of the Nuclear Weapon States on Verification and Transparency, held in London, provided a unique and important forum for our countries to discuss a wide range of nuclear issues. All participants agreed that was a very successful conference, and we are pleased that the Paris meeting will offer an opportunity to build upon its positive results. We look forward to working closely with our counterparts to develop a work plan to further our collective efforts in an area of profound interest to the international community. The meeting will be a constructive step in the process of engagement laid out at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, there are a number of other important issues I did not address but which will be before you in the coming days. Our Delegation hopes that colleagues have found this overview of U.S. security policy informative. We, in turn, will listen with interest to the statements of others. The U.S. delegation plans to address other aspects of this year’s agenda during our interactive dialogues, and we look forward to collaborating with other delegations on this year’s draft resolutions and decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.