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

Mr. Chairman,

The United States is a staunch advocate for the three treaties that comprise the global non-proliferation regime against Weapons of Mass Destruction. There have been notable success, but there is still a great deal more to do to meet the challenge posed by WMD in the hands of State or non-state actors. Our general statement of October 4, outlined some of these accomplishments and future goals in our nuclear arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament agenda to advance President’s Obama’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons. Today, I’d like to highlight some key opportunities for the United States and the international community to work together to constrain the potential misuse of chemical and biological materials.

Mr. Chairman, the United States remains firmly committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention and recognizes the significance of these agreements to our efforts to strengthen global arms control and nonproliferation.
Chemical Weapons Convention

The United States is encouraged by the advances made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in working toward a world free of chemical weapons. The progress made to date is the result of the combined efforts of the Organisation's 188 Member States, along with the Organisation's Technical Secretariat, led by its distinguished Director-General, Ahmet Üzümcü. We look forward to the day when all nations are member states, when all chemical weapons have been verifiably destroyed and when the knowledge of chemistry is used solely for the benefit of humankind. Even after the world rids itself of existing stockpiles, the OPCW will remain the indispensable organ for attaining world-wide adherence to the precepts of the Chemical Weapons Convention, thereby assuring the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes. The United States stands behind the goal of complete, verifiable destruction of all chemical weapons.

The United States continues to make steady progress in destroying our chemical weapons. To date, we have already destroyed 89 percent of our original chemical weapons stockpile. On October 3, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reaffirmed our commitment to finish the job as quickly as possible in accordance with national and treaty requirements that ensure the safety of people and the protection of the environment. Secretary Clinton stated: "The United States is committed to the complete elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles in the United States and around the world..." She went on to add; that "The international community must continue to speak with one voice and remain vigilant, so these weapons pose no threat to people here or anywhere."
Mr. Chairman, the United States is committed to the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and understands that we must work together constructively with the OPCW has fostered to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.

**Biological Weapons Convention**

That same constructive, collaborative approach has in recent years been a hallmark of international efforts under the Biological Weapons Convention, and it has produced real, tangible benefits. Mr. Chairman, we live in a time when rapid advances in the life sciences are yielding new understanding and promise astounding benefits for mankind. This is something we should embrace and celebrate. But at the same time, we must be mindful that these insights and developments can also be misused for harmful purposes. We must work together to support the great promise of the revolution in the life sciences while taking steps to guard against misuse.

The Biological Weapons Convention is an important part of this effort. As the first treaty to ban an entire class of weapons, this Convention is the critical foundation to global efforts to address the threat posed by biological weapons—whether in the hands of governments or non-state actors. To remain effective, it must continue to adapt in order to adequately address the wider range of biological threats we face in the 21st century. Over the last several years, the States Parties to the BWC have come together to share information and foster progress in important areas such as biosafety and pathogen security, professional responsibility in the life sciences and codes of conduct surrounding dual-use issues, assistance with disease surveillance capacity building and national implementation measures. Nations
around the world have made strides, sometimes individually, sometimes collaboratively, in strengthening measures to prevent, detect, and respond to the threat posed by biological weapons, and the work we have done in Geneva has played an important galvanizing role. It is clear to the United States that the Biological Weapons Convention remains relevant and important in today’s world. But there is more to be done, and the BWC can and should continue to evolve.

Mr. Chairman, an important opportunity is before us: BWC States Parties will gather in Geneva this December for the Convention’s seventh Review Conference, which will set the course of work for the next five years. The United States will seek to build on the work of the last five years, but go beyond this, with a more vigorous and ambitious program of work. We will urge member states to work together to find ways to strengthen implementation of the Convention and enhance mutual confidence in compliance with its obligations. This should include efforts to strengthen and improve BWC confidence-building measures, consideration of how to more constructively use the Convention’s consultative provisions to increase confidence, and richer use of transparency measures to provide greater assurance. We will also urge member states to work together on measures to counter the threat of bioterrorism and to understand and appropriately manage the risks of scientific and technological developments without constraining important, peaceful applications.

Finally, because today’s broader range of threats means that prevention may not always be possible – as the U.S. knows from painful experience – we believe that BWC parties should work to strengthen capacities to detect and respond to an attack should one occur. Many of these capabilities are also required for response to naturally-occurring disease. That should not deter us, or lull us into
complacency that shortcomings will be addressed somewhere else. Instead it should impress upon us the need for collaboration with other organizations to jointly develop these dual-benefit capacities. It is our hope that all relevant sectors of national governments, as well as NGOs, academics, scientists and many others, will join together with us in these vital efforts. But I would like to emphasize that while the United States has ideas for the Review Conference, we do not assume that we have the only ideas. We have spent a great deal of time listening to others over the past year, and I intend to consult with many of my colleagues here during the course of the First Committee session, to better understand their goals and priorities for the Review Conference and to find constructive, collaborative ways forward.

Mr. Chairman, the BWC today stands at 164 members, and this year we welcome Mozambique, our newest State Party. That is an impressive number—and yet it’s not nearly enough. This Convention embodies a fundamental norm, and it lags far behind both the NPT and the Chemical Weapons Convention in membership. We urge all members of the United Nations to join in this unequivocal rejection of the use of disease as a weapon. As one of the three BWC depositaries, the United States will continue to work hard to encourage greater national, regional and global attention to the critical issues addressed through the Biological Weapons Convention, and to encourage and assist others to join the Convention. Our collective security depends on the broadest possible participation in the BWC—but equally importantly, deep participation, with both faithful compliance with the Convention’s prohibitions and vigorous implementation of its obligations.