Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations, Ambassador Ibrahim Dabbashi, on your election as Chair of the First Committee during its 68th session. We pledge to support your leadership and the work of this committee. We look forward to a productive session.

This is the fourth year in a row that I have spoken to the UNGA First Committee on behalf of the United States. I look back to 2009 and I am proud of all we have accomplished. That said, we have a long path in front of us.

The conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons do not yet exist, but together we are completely capable of creating these conditions. I am sure of this, because of the examples of our predecessors.

As you all may know, tomorrow is the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT). This groundbreaking Treaty went from a seemingly unattainable goal on the horizon to an international law on the books within a year of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Perhaps it was those dark days that helped solidify U.S. President Kennedy's view that it was possible -- in fact, imperative -- that we work to address nuclear dangers through multilateral diplomacy.

"Peace need not be impracticable," he said, "and war need not be inevitable. By defining our goal more clearly -- by making it seem more manageable and less remote -- we can help all people to see it, to draw hope from it and to move irresistibly towards it."

Mr. Chairman, that idea should be our touchstone as we move forward with the Committee's work. If our predecessors could accomplish a Treaty like the LTBT in the midst of the Cold War, surely we can find ways to work on further arms
reductions, increased transparency, banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and more.

Over the last fifty years, we have had many unprecedented successes. We have gone from the brink of nuclear war to successful strategic reduction treaties – the latest of which will bring us by 2018 to the lowest number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons since the 1950s.

We have continued to limit nuclear explosive testing over the years through treaties, including the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) that prohibited the United States and the Soviet Union from conducting a nuclear explosive test in excess of 150 kilotons. Before the TTBT entered into force, some voiced concerns that the parties had different ways to measure explosive yields. To deal with this problem, the United States and the Soviet Union undertook an unprecedented step in transparency and confidence-building. They invited each other to their respective nuclear test sites to observe a nuclear test and use their preferred methods for measuring explosive yields as they applied to the TTBT. That event, known as the Joint Verification Experiment, happened 25 years ago and it paved the way for subsequent negotiations of new verification protocols for both the TTBT and the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty (PNET). Our joint work would ultimately help the international community negotiate a total ban on nuclear explosive testing, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

This year also marks a significant nonproliferation accomplishment: the 1993 United States-Russian Federation Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) Purchase Agreement will reach a major milestone with the final delivery of low enriched uranium (LEU) derived from downblending 500 metric tons of Russian weapons origin HEU. The LEU that results from this downblending process is delivered to the United States, fabricated into nuclear fuel, and used by nearly all U.S. nuclear power plants to generate approximately half of the nuclear energy in the United States. Approximately 20,000 nuclear warheads have been eliminated under this unique government-industry partnership. Over the past 15 years, nuclear fuel from this source has accounted for approximately 10% of all electricity produced in the United States.

We expect to meet with our Russian partners this November to observe the loading in St. Petersburg of the final containers of LEU downblended under the Agreement, and we will meet again in the United States when that ship delivers this important cargo in December. We look forward to jointly celebrating this historic achievement.
Another success that flies under the radar is the Open Skies Treaty. It just marked its 1000th completed mission in August. It is a great example of a Euro-Atlantic transparency and confidence building measure, and it has proven itself as a valuable arms control monitoring tool, for both strategic and conventional purposes.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, the Obama Administration, working with international partners, has made many of its own significant achievements in nonproliferation and disarmament: entry into force of the New START Treaty, the launching of the Nuclear Security Summit process, an agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to each verifiably dispose of 34 tons of weapons grade plutonium, and more recently, signature of an agreement between the United States and Russia on threat reduction that reinforces our longstanding partnership on nonproliferation.

But it is not enough: the United States and Russian Federation still possess over ninety percent of the nuclear weapons in the world, and it is time we move beyond Cold War postures.

That is why in June, the President announced in Berlin that we would pursue further reductions of deployed strategic nuclear weapons. This decision flowed from the Administration’s extensive analysis of the current strategic environment and deterrence requirements. That analysis confirmed that the United States can ensure its security and that of our allies, and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent, while reducing our deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one-third below the level established by the New START Treaty. The President said on that occasion, “I intend to seek negotiated cuts with Russia to move beyond Cold War postures.” Toward that end, we will pursue a treaty with the Russian Federation.

We are also making sure our lines of communication on strategic issues are solid. On Monday in Bali, U.S. Secretary of State Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov signed a new agreement to strengthen the connection between our Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers (NRRCs). Today’s NRRC-to-NRRC relationship and communications link continue to provide vital transparency in strategic and conventional forces, facilitate verification of arms control treaties and agreements, and support strategic stability. Actually, we just passed a significant milestone -- the two Centers have now exchanged over five thousand New START Treaty notifications since its entry into force, which provide us day-to-day updates on the status of each others’ nuclear forces. These are joined by the 97 on-site inspections
that we have now conducted under New START, which give us even more insights into each others' nuclear forces, thus enhancing predictability for both countries.

We are also working with the other Nuclear Weapons States (P5) on disarmament-related issues to support implementation of the NPT and the 2010 NPT Action Plan. The P5 have now had four official conferences, with China hosting the fifth meeting next year. But we are not just meeting; through dialogue at the political level and concrete work at the expert level, our engagement has moved from concepts to concrete actions.

For example, P5 experts are meeting to address issues related to the CTBT, especially those relating to the On-Site Inspection (OSI) element of the CTBT's verification regime and to the OSI Integrated Field Exercise to be conducted in Jordan in 2014. The objective of this effort is to define and engage in technical collaborative work based on our unique expertise with past nuclear explosive tests.

In the broader multilateral context, the United States continues to hold to its long-standing position calling for the immediate commencement of long delayed negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). This treaty is the obvious next step in multilateral disarmament and it is time to get to the table. We hope that the upcoming UN Group of Governmental Experts on FMCT will provide useful impetus. Another priority for the United States is to continue to build support for the ratification of the CTBT, as affirmed by President Obama this past June. We encourage all Annex 2 nations to join us in this pursuit.

Mr. Chairman, we will have a lot of things to discuss and debate this session, from cyber and space security to conventional arms control, from humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons to a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. It is critical that we continue our work together. Two weeks ago, the international community reached a landmark with UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and the Executive Council decision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Together, they enable a strong international partnership to eliminate chemical weapons from Syria and end this threat to the Syrian people.

And elsewhere, we should be cautious, but cognizant of potentially historic opportunities. We must continue our push to bring Iran back into line with its international nuclear obligations. We will also continue to make clear to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that should it meet its own denuclearization commitments, it too can have an opportunity to reintegrate into
the international community. The United States is ready to talk, we are ready to listen, we are ready to work hard, and we hope that every country in this room is ready to join us.

It is no secret there are issues on which we disagree. This does not mean that we stop trying to move ahead in a step-by-step fashion. Even in the darkest days of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union found it in our mutual interest to work together on reducing the nuclear threat. Of course, today, this is not just the responsibility of the United States and Russia. All states can and must contribute to the conditions for disarmament, as well as nonproliferation; they are two sides of the same coin.

Mr. Chairman, the road toward the next steps might not be familiar and it will require difficult negotiations and complicated diplomacy. Nevertheless, armed with patience and persistence, we can keep our compasses pointed at the one reason we are here: to pursue disarmament in ways that promote mutual security, because it is in our mutual interest.

The United States asks that we all commit ourselves to the hard work ahead.

This statement will be made available on the website of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.