Statement by
Department of State
United States of America

Cluster 1
First Session of the Preparatory Committee
2015 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
May 3, 2012
Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

In his April 2009 speech in Prague, President Obama highlighted the nuclear dangers of the 21st century and declared that, to overcome these threats, the United States reaffirms our enduring commitment “to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.” Speaking in Seoul this past March, the President reaffirmed U.S. support for this goal and highlighted the near-term, practical steps that the United States is taking to move in that direction.

At the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, NPT Parties pulled together to reaffirm their support for the Treaty as a vital instrument of global security and their own security. Essential to that reaffirmation was the Parties’ agreement on a forward-looking Action Plan that includes steps toward the goal of nuclear disarmament. The United States is committed to working with all other countries to implement the Action Plan effectively. By supporting the Action Plan, the United States reaffirms our commitment to the principles of irreversibility, verifiability, and transparency as necessary building blocks of nuclear disarmament.

The United States is committed to leading by example by working toward fulfilling the nuclear and non-nuclear disarmament obligations of Article VI of the NPT and the commitments in the 2010 NPT Action Plan.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has been reducing our inventory of nuclear weapons for more than four decades. By September 2009, the U.S. nuclear
stockpile was reduced by 84% to approximately 5,000 nuclear warheads from its peak of approximately 31,000 nuclear warheads in 1967. During this period, the United States unilaterally reduced our non-strategic nuclear warheads by 90%.

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which entered into force on February 5, 2011, is a further demonstration of the commitment of the United States to work toward President Obama’s ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons. When the Treaty is fully implemented, the strategic nuclear forces of the United States and Russia will reach their lowest level since the 1950s. The rigorous and extensive verification provisions of the New START Treaty testify to the importance of transparency and effective verification in providing predictability and stability in international relations. I would like to encourage all delegations to attend the side event on the New START Treaty that will be presented by the United States and the Russian Federation today at 13:15 in this Plenary Hall.

When President Obama signed the New START Treaty in April 2010, he said that the United States will pursue a future agreement with Russia for broad reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons – strategic, non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed. To this end, the United States seeks to promote strategic stability and to increase transparency on a reciprocal basis with Russia.

As President Obama repeated in Seoul in March, the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons will not be reached quickly. The President noted that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal, both to deter potential adversaries and to assure U.S. allies and other security partners that they can count on the security commitments undertaken by
the United States. The President also said in Seoul that, after New START is implemented, we will still have more nuclear weapons than we need. The United States is now conducting the follow-on analysis called for in the 2010 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to set goals for future nuclear reductions in line with strategic requirements. Meanwhile, the NPR has ruled out the development of new U.S. nuclear warheads and new missions and capabilities for existing warheads.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has also demonstrated leadership through unilateral transparency measures. Examples include the U.S. release in 2010 of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile figures and articulation in the 2010 NPR of the reduced role of nuclear weapons in the U.S. national strategy. In addition, the U.S. nuclear community is exploring the technical steps needed to ensure irreversibility, verifiability, and transparency as essential building blocks of nuclear disarmament. We are also considering ways to collaborate with other NPT Parties in this undertaking.

Since the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the five NPT nuclear-weapon states (also known as the “P5”) have met regularly to discuss our commitments in the Conference’s Action Plan. Following the 2009 London and 2011 Paris P5 conferences, the United States will host a P5 conference in Washington June 27 – 29, 2012. The P5 process now underway is expanding the long-standing U.S.-Russia nuclear disarmament dialogue into an ongoing process of P5 engagement on issues related to nuclear disarmament, consistent with our obligations under Article VI of the NPT and our commitments under the 2010 NPT Action Plan.

Mr. Chairman, in the area of nuclear testing, President Obama pledged in his Prague speech that his administration would pursue U.S. ratification of the
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Administration has been engaging with the U.S. Senate on the CTBT, laying the groundwork for positive Senate reconsideration of the Treaty. At the same time, the United States has continued to support completion of the CTBT's monitoring and verification regime.

The last U.S. test of a nuclear explosive device was in September 1992. Since then, the United States has maintained a voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. The United States remains committed to this moratorium, and calls upon all states to refrain from nuclear explosive testing. The 2010 NPR reiterated that the United States no longer requires nuclear explosive testing to ensure the safety and effectiveness of our remaining nuclear weapons, relying instead on our long-standing Stockpile Stewardship Program.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to fissile material, the United States has not produced highly enriched uranium (HEU) for weapons since 1964 or produced plutonium for weapons since 1988. The United States has worked with Russia for a number of years to eliminate excess stocks of HEU and plutonium that could be used in nuclear warheads. In July 2011, the United States and Russia brought the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement and its 2006 and 2010 Protocols into force, committing each country to dispose of at least 34 metric tons of excess weapon-grade plutonium. This is enough for a total of 17,000 nuclear weapons. The United States remains committed to completing an agreement with Russia and the IAEA to enable the Agency to verify each side’s disposition programs. The United States also remains committed to negotiation of a fissile material cutoff treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices as an essential and the next
logical multilateral step toward disarmament and an important foundation for future nuclear reductions. We deeply regret that the Conference on Disarmament has failed to take up treaty negotiations, but we will continue with our partners to look for a productive path forward.

Mr. Chairman, an early and significant demonstration of U.S. commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament was the 1969 U.S. decision to unilaterally dismantle our biological weapons program, and our leadership role in negotiating the 1975 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC). Over the years, we have also contributed to strengthening the BWC and have led efforts to address changing threats through the BWC. Most recently, for example, Secretary Clinton unveiled a new U.S. Bio Transparency and Openness Initiative at the 2011 BWC Review Conference.

With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the United States remains fully committed to achieving 100 percent destruction of chemical weapons as soon as practicable, consistent with the Convention’s imperatives of public safety, environmental protection, and international transparency and oversight. We have destroyed approximately 90% of our chemical weapons stockpile, and provided financial and technical aid to other CWC States Parties for the elimination of their declared CW stockpiles.

The United States is also a participating State or State Party to Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, the Open Skies Treaty, and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, which constitute the three conventional arms control pillars in Europe. We continue to actively engage with NATO Allies, Russia, and other partners to determine current and future
requirements in an effort to modernize the conventional arms control regime in Europe.

The United States has contributed to conventional weapons disarmament efforts in other ways as well. For example, we have ended all use of persistent landmines, provided more than $1.9 billion in aid in over 80 countries for conventional weapons destruction programs, and cooperated with countries to destroy approximately 33,000 man-portable air defense systems in over 30 countries.

Mr. Chairman, the United States recognizes the special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon states to make progress toward nuclear disarmament. But all NPT Parties can contribute to the Treaty's disarmament goals, both by pursuing disarmament steps themselves and by taking other steps to help create the conditions for such progress. This is by necessity an area of shared responsibility. In addition, progress on disarmament under the NPT is integrally linked to nonproliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, for which we all have shared responsibility – nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states alike.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, implementation of President Obama's Prague agenda and the 2010 NPT Action Plan is well underway. Much progress has been achieved, yet much remains to be done. The United States will continue to work toward fulfilling our obligations under Article VI of the NPT and our commitments under the Action Plan. The United States will also continue to urge other NPT Parties to do the same. As Article VI makes clear, all NPT Parties have a role to play in disarmament.