Statement by Thomas Countryman

Assistant Secretary for International Security and Nonproliferation

Department of State

United States of America

General Debate

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Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Check Against Delivery
Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the United States Delegation, let me add my voice to those congratulating you on your selection to chair this second Preparatory Committee meeting. I want to assure you of our Delegation’s readiness to work with you and other delegations here to build on the encouraging results of the 2010 Review Conference and to advance preparations for 2015.

I would like to begin my remarks by reading a message from Secretary of State John Kerry to the 2013 NPT Preparatory Committee:

Begin Message

On behalf of the United States, please accept my hopes for and personal commitment to a successful and productive meeting of the preparatory committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

This summer, we will celebrate the 45th anniversary of the signing of the NPT. Although conceived in a different era when the hands of the Doomsday Clock pointed precariously towards disaster, the treaty’s goal of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons remains no less relevant today. This is why, in 2009, President Obama re-affirmed our nation’s support for the treaty and called on all countries to join us in working to secure the peace and security of a world free of the threat of nuclear catastrophe.

The President’s agenda is rooted in the interest almost all of us share in preserving the treaty as a basis for global cooperation. We will continue to do our part by taking action to reduce the number of nuclear weapons, their roles, and the likelihood of their use. At the same time, we will work to strengthen international safeguards and encourage peaceful uses of nuclear energy by states that meet their
obligations. In response to those who abuse the treaty, we will continue to insist that violations be confronted with the urgency they require. A treaty that is universally followed will best advance international security and nuclear energy’s contribution to peace, health, and prosperity.

I wish this conference well and offer my hope for a productive discussion that builds on the consensus action plan approved by the 2010 NPT Review Conference and that puts us on a path to success in 2015.

End Message

Mr. Chairman, the United States shares the view of many here that agreement on the 2010 Action Plan represented an important achievement. It was not only the first of its kind in the NPT’s history, but it reset the NPT and each of its three pillars at the center of efforts to build a safer world: one in which the barriers to nuclear proliferation remain high; violators are held accountable; and progress to reduce nuclear weapons, contain risks of nuclear terrorism, and expand peaceful uses of nuclear energy is not only possible but underway. This is the direction we seek. It is one that we believe all NPT parties should support and that will keep us on course toward our ultimate goal of achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

Some may argue that the Action Plan is not perfect. We agree; it does not reflect every U.S. priority. I am quite sure others view it similarly from their perspective. This imperfection is to be expected given the complexities of a multilateral negotiation involving the Treaty’s diverse membership. But even an imperfect document is still valuable. And in this instance, the NPT membership
should take pride in having adopted a forward-looking set of principles and commitments that so clearly reinforce the NPT and its underlying purposes.

We understand that progress on the Action Plan should naturally be the subject of review by NPT parties. We encourage such a review, and a dialogue that is balanced, addressing each of the Treaty’s three pillars; substantive; candid; and pursued with the aim of preserving collective support for the Treaty as an instrument of security.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to say a few words on implementation of the Treaty. We will have more to say on these topics later in the week.

**Disarmament**

The United States acknowledges its special responsibility to work toward nuclear disarmament and to help create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. President Obama has made clear our unequivocal support for this goal.

It will not be achieved overnight or absent further improvements in the international security environment. But as the President has said, we must continue this journey with concrete steps.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is making good on that pledge. We are reducing the role and numbers of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy. We have committed not to develop new nuclear warheads or pursue new military missions for nuclear weapons. We are implementing the New START Treaty with Russia that will reduce deployed nuclear warheads to levels not seen since the 1950s – more than a decade before the NPT entered into force. President Obama has committed the United States to pursue still deeper cuts. And let me be clear: We share concerns about the profound and serious consequences of nuclear
weapons use and have articulated our deep and abiding interest in extending forever the 68-year record of non-use. And we will continue our diligent work with our P5 partners to meet our commitments under the Action Plan.

**Nonproliferation**

Let me also state clearly that disarmament is not an obligation limited to the five NPT nuclear-weapon states. It will require action by all NPT Parties, who collectively share a responsibility to support the nonproliferation regime and ensure its rules are robust and fully respected.

The Action Plan makes clear the importance of resolving all cases of noncompliance with IAEA safeguards. The United States regards noncompliance by Iran and Syria as serious threats to the integrity of the nonproliferation regime. NPT Parties must stand shoulder-to-shoulder in demanding these governments return to full compliance with the NPT, consistent with their international obligations. States must be held accountable for their violations of the Treaty or for abusing the withdrawal provision. This should be of concern to all NPT Parties.

Looking forward, we must also ensure the IAEA continues to have the resources and authorities it needs to verify peaceful nuclear uses in conformity with Article III of the Treaty. A system of IAEA safeguards that enjoys broad political support and is technically sound benefits the security of all NPT Parties. It demonstrates to everyone the commitment not to pursue nuclear weapons and makes peaceful nuclear cooperation possible. With this in mind, we will continue working with Parties to gain acceptance of the Additional Protocol, along with a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, as the standard for NPT verification and
encourage further IAEA work to strengthen safeguards implementation so that the international community can be assured that a state’s nuclear activities are entirely peaceful.

The United States also wishes to highlight the indispensible role of nuclear security and prevention of nuclear terrorism in advancing our nonproliferation goals. We have made great strides to address this threat through the Nuclear Security Summit process launched by President Obama in 2010 and look forward to expanding our partnerships, accelerating cooperation, and establishing durable institutions to carry on this vital work. The IAEA’s International Conference on Nuclear Security this July will be important gathering to advance this urgent priority.

**Peaceful Uses**

Mr. Chairman, when nuclear security and nonproliferation are reinforced, we are in a stronger position to promote the safe and responsible use of nuclear energy. We recognize the right of NPT Parties to access peaceful nuclear energy consistent with the Treaty’s nonproliferation provisions. There is no more generous partner than the United States. We contribute more than any single state to IAEA promotional programs that benefit the Treaty’s non-nuclear weapon states, and pledged to provide $50 million over five years to a new IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI). I am pleased to note that more than 120 IAEA Member States have benefited from PUI assistance.

We understand that nations will make their own choices about nuclear energy. But international cooperation can offer new and beneficial opportunities that empower those choices and ensure the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear
energy. This is why President Obama called for new frameworks for civil nuclear cooperation, and it is why my government supports the establishment of an IAEA fuel bank and related measures to assure nuclear fuel supply in a manner that contributes to the Treaty's nonproliferation goals. We look forward to discussing these topics further this week.

**Conclusion**

Before closing, I would like to comment on efforts to hold a conference on a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, a subject on which the United States will have more to say later. I emphasize that the United States supports the goal of establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East and the convening of a conference involving all states in the region to discuss it. Although it proved not possible to meet in Helsinki last year, my government remains firmly committed to working with the Facilitator, the other conveners, and with all states in the region to take steps that will create conditions for a successful and meaningful conference. On that basis, we hope the relevant parties can agree to hold it soon. Reaching Helsinki, and success at Helsinki, will require the states of the region to engage with each other.

Mr. Chairman, the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear nonproliferation regime and a basis for international nuclear cooperation. That regime is not without its challenges, but none are insurmountable and none are beyond discussion.

We look forward to a productive dialogue at this Preparatory Committee meeting, and as we work together to ensure the Treaty's contributions to international peace and security are strengthened and endure. Thank you.