Mr. Chairman,

From the outset of his administration, President Obama has supported the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and the solid practical steps that the United States is taking to move in that direction. This step-by-step approach to disarmament is the most effective means to increase stability, reduce nuclear dangers, and fulfill our obligations under the NPT.

The U.S. leads by example in fulfilling obligations under the NPT and the commitments set out in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan. The United States is committed to the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency for nuclear disarmament. The United States is also working with other NPT Parties to implement the Action Plan across all three pillars.

The United States has been reducing its nuclear weapons for more than four decades. By September 2009, the U.S. nuclear stockpile was reduced by 84 percent 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 its non-strategic nuclear warheads by 90 percent.

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the United States and Russia, now in its third successful year in force demonstrates our commitment to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. When the Treaty limits apply in 2018, the strategic nuclear forces of the United States and Russia will be capped at their lowest level since the 1950s. The rigorous and extensive provisions of the Treaty testify to the importance of transparency and effective verification in providing predictability and stability in international relations. I hope delegations were able to hear Acting Undersecretary Gottemoeller’s briefing on New START with her counterpart negotiator Russian Deputy Defense Minister Antonov.

When President Obama signed New START in 2012, he made clear his commitment to further reductions and to pursuing discussions with Russia on further reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons – strategic, non-strategic,
deployed and non-deployed. In his 2013 State of the Union address, the President reiterated his commitment to further reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia. To this end, the United States seeks to promote strategic stability and increase transparency on a reciprocal basis with Russia. Earlier this month, the President’s National Security Advisor had comprehensive and constructive discussions with several Russian officials, including President Putin, on a range of bilateral and global issues.

NATO has also made clear that it will consider further reducing its requirement for non-strategic nuclear weapons in the context of reciprocal steps by Russia, taking into account the disparity between Russian and U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapon stockpiles in Europe.

The goal of a world without nuclear weapons will not be reached quickly. It will take sustained commitment and persistence and must be pursued through concrete, practical steps. In seeking this goal, the United States holds to the basic principles that it outlined in its 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the NPR: preventing nuclear proliferation and terrorism; reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national strategy; maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at reduced force levels; reassuring U.S. allies and partners; and sustaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal as long as nuclear weapons exist.

With regard to modernization, the 2010 NPR made clear that the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads neither will it support new military missions nor provide for new military capabilities The United States has significantly reduced the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security and military strategy. Further steps can and should be taken. The fundamental role of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States, our allies, and partners. We will work to establish the conditions under which a universal policy that makes deterrence of nuclear attack the sole purpose of nuclear weapons could be safely adopted.

The United States has also demonstrated leadership through unilateral transparency measures. U.S. released in 2010 its nuclear weapons stockpile figures and articulated in the NPR the reduced role of nuclear weapons. The U.S. nuclear community is exploring the technical steps needed to ensure irreversibility, verifiability, and transparency for further nuclear disarmament and we are also considering ways to collaborate with other NPT Parties in this undertaking.

Since the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the five nuclear-weapon States under the NPT (or “P5”) have met regularly to address and make progress on our
commitments under the 2010 NPT Action Plan. Last week, Russia hosted the fourth successful P5 Conference. The P5 process has expanded the long-standing U.S.-Russia nuclear disarmament dialogue into an ongoing process of P5 engagement, consistent with our obligations under Article VI of the NPT and our commitments under the Action Plan.

In the area of nuclear testing, President Obama pledged 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 and laying the groundwork for positive Senate reconsideration of the Treaty. The United States is vigorously supporting completion of the CTBT’s monitoring and verification regime though both assessed and substantial voluntary funding.

Since 1992, the United States has maintained a voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. The 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. The United States calls upon all states, to refrain from nuclear testing. I recall the joint statement by the P-5 on April 19 that affirmed the joint concern about the serious challenge posed by nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on February 12.

With regard to fissile material, the United States has not produced highly enriched uranium (HEU) for weapons since 1964 nor produced plutonium for weapons since 1988. The United States has worked with Russia to eliminate excess stocks of fissile material that could be used in nuclear warheads. Under the 1993 U.S.-Russia HEU Purchase Agreement, 472 metric tons of Russian weapons-origin HEU, which is equivalent to about 18,900 nuclear weapons, has now been down-blended for use as commercial reactor fuel in the United States; that number is expected to reach the Agreement’s 500-metric ton target within this calendar year. In 2011, the United States and Russia brought the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement and its Protocols into force, committing each country to dispose of at least 34 metric tons of excess weapon-grade plutonium. This is enough for approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons. Disposition will be subject to IAEA monitoring and will irreversibly transform the material into forms that cannot be used for nuclear weapons.

As we dispose of existing stocks of fissile material, the United States remains certain that a verified end to the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is both essential and the next logical multilateral step towards
disarmament. We have been working to initiate negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), and we are disappointed at the CD’s lack of progress. We are also endeavoring to use available opportunities on the margins of the CD to make progress toward FMCT negotiations, including serious consultations among the states that would be directly affected by an FMCT. We are hopeful that the UN Group of Governmental Experts to be established by UN General Assembly Resolution 67/53 will also provide an impetus to the CD.

Since the darkest days of the Cold War, the United States has fully understood and shares concerns about the profound and serious consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons. We accord the highest priority to avoiding such use. As President Reagan said in 1984, “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” It is in our interest, as well as that of all nations, that the now nearly 68-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons be extended forever. As stated in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the United States would only consider the use of nuclear weapons under the most extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners.

The United States recognizes the special responsibility of the NPT 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, such as initiating FMCT negotiations and adherence to the CTBT, and by helping to create the conditions for such progress. 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.

The U.S. working paper on disarmament submitted at this Preparatory Committee session provides additional details regarding U.S. progress toward nuclear disarmament, as well as a synopsis of U.S. non-nuclear disarmament and arms control efforts. I commend it to our colleagues.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that while much progress has been achieved, much remains to be done. The United States will continue to work step by step towards fulfilling our obligations under Article VI of the NPT and our commitments under the Action Plan across all three NPT pillars. We urge other NPT Parties to do the same. As Article VI makes clear, all NPT Parties have a role to play in disarmament.
Let me conclude with an all too brief tribute to George Bunn who just passed away. George Bunn was one of my predecessors as US Ambassador to the CD. He played a crucial role, together with Soviet negotiators, in finding creative and enduring language during the negotiation of the NPT, the landmark treaty that unites us in the hall today. He was an extraordinary man who left an extraordinary legacy.