Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to provide an update on ongoing U.S. activities in fulfillment of our obligations and commitments under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the 2010 NPT Action Plan. In this context, I highlight the extensive report that the United States has submitted to this Preparatory Committee meeting, consistent with Actions 5, 20, and 21 of the 2010 NPT Action Plan.

U.S. policy is to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. This remains a central element of President Obama’s nuclear agenda, and we are working to create conditions that can enable its eventual achievement by pursuing a multifaceted, step-by-step approach incorporating national, bilateral, and multilateral actions.

It is because we understand the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons that the United States continues to devote considerable resources in a decades-long effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons. There is no “quick fix” to achieving nuclear disarmament. There is no path other than the hard, daily work of verifiable step-by-step disarmament to which we remain resolutely committed.

In line with our support for the NPT, in 2010 the United States changed our nuclear posture to further reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and emphasize the interest of all nations in extending the 69-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons. The President also made it clear that the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads nor will we pursue new military missions for nuclear weapons.

This important shift in U.S. nuclear posture has taken place against the backdrop of dramatic and ongoing reductions in our nuclear arsenal. In fact, when the NPT entered into force in 1970, the United States had a nuclear stockpile of over 26,000 nuclear weapons. As Under Secretary Gottemoeller announced on Tuesday, the
U.S. nuclear stockpile now has been reduced to 4,804 warheads, which reflects an 85% decrease from its Cold War peak. During this period, the United States reduced its non-strategic nuclear warheads by 90 percent. To lend a better sense of the scale of this ongoing activity in the post-Cold War period, between 1994 and 2013, the United States dismantled 9,952 nuclear warheads.

Moreover, this effort continues as we fulfill our obligations under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) between the United States and Russia, now in its fourth year of implementation. When the Treaty limits are reached in 2018, the strategic forces of the United States and Russia will be capped at 1,550 deployed strategic warheads, their lowest level since the 1950s.

Contrary to the view expressed by some in this hall, we do not regard the achievement of nuclear disarmament as simply a rhetorical goal. It is one the United States is working on and pursuing every day.

And this work is not done. As outlined by President Obama in Berlin in June 2013, the United States remains open to negotiate further reductions with Russia in all categories of nuclear weapons – including strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons.

We are also developing effective verification methodologies and processes that will be essential as we move toward increasingly smaller nuclear arsenals. Our experience with verified bilateral nuclear disarmament provides valuable experience and useful tools for multilateral nuclear disarmament approaches in the future. To that end, we are working closely with all NPT nuclear weapon states (or “P5”) to lay the foundation for future arms control agreements with participants beyond Russia and the United States.

Within the P5 process we have institutionalized regular dialogue on nuclear weapons-related issues. China hosted a fifth P5 Conference in Beijing on April 14 and 15, and the United Kingdom has agreed to host a sixth conference next year. Through these high-level conferences and frequent expert-level meetings, the P5 were able to reach consensus on a framework for reporting to this PrepCom in accordance with their commitments in the Action Plan. P5 CTBT experts have held productive discussions on ways they can collaborate in strengthening the CTBT monitoring regime. And the P5 Working Group on Nuclear Terms and Definitions, chaired by China, has made progress on the development of a P5 nuclear terms glossary.
The significance of this work should not be underestimated. P5 engagement is a long-term investment to strengthen and advance the NPT, build trust and create a stronger foundation to achieve the Treaty’s disarmament and nonproliferation goals. In addition, the United States and the United Kingdom are conducting a joint project to further develop verification procedures and technologies, which we will brief today at 1:15 p.m. in the North Lawn Building, Conference Room 5.

Turning to the broader multilateral context, the United States supports the immediate commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), which is the next logical and necessary step toward achieving our shared disarmament goals. A verifiable ban on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is necessary if we are to create conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. All states can contribute to achieving this goal. We are disappointed that the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has been unable to initiate negotiations on an FMCT. Even as we continue our efforts in the CD, the United States is actively engaged in the meeting of the FMCT Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), which can usefully complement efforts to promote negotiations of an FMCT in the CD.

In another important multilateral effort, the ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a top priority for the U.S. Administration. Our active involvement in all activities of the CTBT Organization’s Preparatory Commission clearly demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the Treaty and the vital importance the United States attaches to completing the verification regime. The United States recognizes that the voluntary adherence to unilateral nuclear testing moratoria is no substitute for a legally binding prohibition against the conduct of such explosions. Entry into force of the CTBT is in the security interests of every nation. All States have an important role to play in providing the necessary resources to complete the Treaty’s verification regime and maximize the capabilities of the Provisional Technical Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

The United States recognizes the importance of security assurances in the context of the NPT. Accordingly, the United States updated and strengthened its long-standing negative security assurance policy in the context of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review published in April 2010. The United States declared that it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation
obligations. It was also made clear that the United States would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or our allies and partners.

The United States also supports well-crafted nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) that are vigorously enforced and developed in accordance with the guidelines adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission. We are a Party to both Protocols of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and in recent years the United States has worked toward extending legally binding negative security assurances by submitting for ratification the protocols to the African and South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zones. We are pleased to note that the United States and other NPT nuclear weapon states will soon sign the Protocol to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty. The nuclear weapon states are also engaging ASEAN to resolve any remaining differences so that we can sign the revised Protocol to the Southeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone. These actions are a priority for us.

Mr. Chairman,

The United States is committed to achieving a world without nuclear weapons, and we are dedicated to working with all NPT States Parties to make that goal a reality. The pursuit of our shared goal will require patience and persistence from all of us. But we are confident in our purpose, and strengthened in both our methods and morale by the tremendous progress we have made thus far.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.