Statement by the United States in Cluster 3: Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Statement by Andrew Schofer  
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Since President Eisenhower’s 1953 *Atoms for Peace* speech, the United States has been a leader in international civil nuclear cooperation and in facilitating access worldwide to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Achieving the fullest exchange of nuclear energy, science, and technology is made possible in large part by the confidence the NPT and broader nonproliferation regime provide. As we approach the NPT’s 50th anniversary and celebrate the IAEA’s 60th anniversary, the United States reaffirms its commitment to promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in accordance with Article IV of the NPT and in support of UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Chairman,

To date, the United States has been the single largest contributor to IAEA technical cooperation activities through our Regular Budget assessments, support for the IAEA’s Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF), Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI), and other extrabudgetary funding mechanisms. Our extrabudgetary contributions to promote peaceful nuclear applications have alone totaled over $270 million just since 2010. The effects have been real and felt worldwide. Among other priorities, we have helped fund important capacity-building efforts to address urgent needs, such as the Ebola and Zika crises, global disparities in access to cancer therapy, transboundary animal diseases and water shortages, food safety and quality, and environmental effects from the Fukushima nuclear incident. We have also supported IAEA efforts to advance infrastructure development for nuclear power as an important and clean global energy source, including with more than $21 million in U.S. PUI funds. We urge states in a position to do so to support other states in compliance with the NPT in applying nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes in a safe and secure manner.
Today, we reaffirm our $50 million pledge to the PUI for 2015 to 2020 and report that we are well on the way to making good on that pledge. In addition, as we announced in our General Debate statement last week, we are pleased to donate immediately an additional one million euros to the IAEA’s Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories (ReNuAL) project. This is beyond the more than $9.4 million in extrabudgetary funding we have already provided for the project. We encourage other states to contribute the additional funds needed to meet the Agency’s ReNuAL Plus fundraising target this fall. This would enable the IAEA to achieve the efficiencies in lab construction that the Secretariat described in its February 2017 report to the Board of Governors on the ReNuAL Plus project. We look forward to working further with the Friends of ReNuAL group of donors and other Member States to ensure collective contributions that will allow the Agency to complete this important work as efficiently as possible. Once completed, the renovated laboratories will better assist Member States in building critical capacities in their home countries in areas that include human health, animal health, and agricultural productivity.

Mr. Chairman,

In addition to supporting the IAEA’s work, we are proud of our robust bilateral nuclear cooperation activities. We currently have 23 agreements for peaceful nuclear cooperation in force with 50 partners. These allow us to undertake the fullest nuclear cooperation in accordance with the NPT and in conformity with our export control requirements. We urge states with nuclear power programs to make full use of the international commercial market for nuclear fuel and to rely on international mechanisms that provide reliable fuel services. In the event of a major supply disruption of low enriched uranium (LEU), multilateral mechanisms such as the IAEA LEU reserve, which has moved steadily closer to completion, provide a backstop and an alternative to national enrichment programs. In addition to multilateral assurance mechanisms, the United States operates the American Assured Fuel Supply, a reserve of about 230 tons of LEU derived from down-blending 17.4 metric tons of highly enriched uranium declared excess to defense needs. In the event of a severe supply disruption, fuel from this reserve can be made available to domestic or foreign partners.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear safety is an essential factor for ensuring that states have the ability to use nuclear energy responsibly. The international community has made major strides in improving nuclear safety, including emergency preparedness and response. The
seventh review meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety underscored the importance of the Convention’s peer review process. The IAEA’s Action Plan on Nuclear Safety has focused worldwide attention and resources on improving nuclear safety. In addition, significant progress has been made towards the establishment of a global nuclear liability regime based on the Convention on Supplementary and Compensation for Nuclear Damage that would play an important role in facilitating global nuclear cooperation.

Effective nuclear security measures are also an important foundation for enabling access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The United States has contributed almost $150 million since 2002, including over $18 million last year, to the IAEA’s Nuclear Security Fund to support the Agency’s role in helping states ensure adequate security that enables nuclear activities to flourish. The United States also works directly with partners around the world to apply effective nuclear security measures. The entry into force last year of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities will further enhance security practices worldwide. We again underscore that high standards of safety and security do not impede, but rather facilitate, the broadest possible peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, the world is indeed realizing the peaceful promise of the atom. This is the result of robust efforts to ensure that nuclear energy is used safely, securely, and under sound nonproliferation conditions that ensure it is not diverted for weapons use. The United States is committed to ensuring the fullest possible sharing of the benefits that nuclear technology can bring. I am sure you will find us valuable partners in cooperative projects wherever such sharing can be done in a safe and secure manner that does not risk proliferation of nuclear weapons capabilities or enabling dual-use technologies.

All NPT Parties have the right to share in the benefits of nuclear cooperation in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty, including the effective implementation of safeguards measures and assurance that the safeguards obligations under the Treaty are fulfilled. To provide such assurances, safeguards should provide the international community with the ability to ensure that any attempt to divert material or technology to improper purposes would be detected in time to take effective responsive actions. Nonproliferation rigor provides the confidence needed to achieve the “fullest possible exchange” of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes called for in the NPT. States that uphold their
nonproliferation commitments should know that they have a strong partner in the United States toward that end.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.