Mr. Chairman,

You asked us to address “effective measures” today.

As I noted at our last meeting on Wednesday, while some delegations distinguish between “building blocks” and “effective measures,” the United States views these two terms as similar and not distinct alternatives.

Based on the Treaty text, its negotiating record, established State Party practice over decades, and the 2010 Action plan, we underline that “effective measures” refers to a broad range of activities that includes but is not limited to multilateral, legally binding actions. There is no legal gap in the Treaty. Indeed, Action 3 of the 2010 Action Plan is explicit on this point:

“In implementing the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, the nuclear-weapon States commit to undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through” – and here I underscore – “unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures.”

Action 5, with the same clarity, recalls the “steps leading to nuclear disarmament” that may or may not be binding, some of which quite clearly could be taken unilaterally by each nuclear-weapon State. For example, Action 5 (g) addresses enhancing transparency and increasing mutual confidence. That is best done nationally or coordinated among states. In this context, I would like to highlight the national reporting framework that was agreed by the nuclear-weapon States and is the basis for which we have each submitted national reports under Actions 5 and 21.

Mr. Chairman,

As stated, we do not accept the premise that the only “effective measures” are multilateral and legally binding agreements. Such a premise is not faithful to the text or negotiating history of Article VI. And as the final documents from 1995, 2000 and 2010 show, the NPT Parties have not accepted that premise in the past either. For example, in 1995, the Parties decided that effective implementation of Article VI should be achieved through a program of action including “systematic and progressive efforts” by the nuclear-weapon States with the “ultimate goals” of eliminating nuclear weapons.
We accept that multilateral, legal instruments can be important to the implementation of Article VI. They are part of the mix. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, and Nuclear Weapon Free Zones are good examples. We can also accept that the final phase in the nuclear disarmament process should be pursued within an agreed legal framework. But, to be clear, nothing in Article VI requires time frames or specific requirements for achieving the final elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is especially disappointing to hear Parties say this week that Article VI has not been implemented. Our record on Article VI is strong and known by all here. We have been implementing effective measures for decades. I would draw your attention to the U.S. Report to this Conference (available at www.state.gov/npt), and to our Working Paper 44, which provide details on the measures we have already taken that, by any definition, are “effective.” The measures the United States has aggressively pursued over several decades have resulted in the cessation of the Cold War nuclear arms race and an 85% reduction in the number of U.S. nuclear weapons – and about 82% percent reduction since this treaty entered into force. As Secretary Kerry pointed out in his opening address to this conference, over the past 20 years the United States has dismantled an average of more than 1 nuclear warhead every single day. Not easy work. We may still have a ways to go reach the nuclear disarmament destination, we understand that, but it is wrong to assert that the path we are on is not effective or inconsistent with our Treaty commitment.

Mr. Chairman,

The United States takes very seriously its obligations under Article VI of the NPT, just as it does all its obligations under the Treaty. And we are committed to seeking the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. In pursuit of that commitment, we will continue the many effective measures we have already implemented and are constantly pursuing new ones. In the context of further steps, let me recall that the United States has expressed its willingness to further reduce our nuclear weapons in negotiations with Russia. We are ready to start that work today.

I also would take this opportunity to reiterate and re-emphasize that underpinning all of our efforts in this area, stretching back decades, has been our clear understanding and recognition of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. This understanding was in fact the driving force behind the creation of the IAEA and the NPT. Moreover, the issue is not whether nuclear weapons are a security issue or a humanitarian issue – they are both, and this is a fact that is clearly reflected in the NPT’s negotiation history, plain text, and subsequent implementation by States Parties.

Mr. Chairman,

The history of nuclear disarmament shows that each step we take helps to create the conditions and opportunities for subsequent steps. Those conditions and opportunities are the products of vision and realism. They need to be promoted, cultivated, and sometimes cajoled, but they cannot be dictated or scheduled. We have said it often, but it bears repeating - step-by-step does not mean only one step at a time, nor does it mean only sequential steps. Every day the United States pursues disarmament steps
on multiple paths involving a broad range of effective measures. Each step achieved helps to provide foundations for future action. And those steps together bring us closer to the ultimate goal that we all share. We stand ready to continue to work with all of our partners and fellow Parties towards that goal.

Thank you.