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**Specific Issue – Regional issues, including with respect to the Middle East and
implementation of the 1995 Middle East Resolution**

**Third Session of the Preparatory Committee
2010 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
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Mr. Chairman,

our discussion today presents an important opportunity to review and assess specific regional challenges confronting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). To enhance their mutual security – the overarching purpose of the NPT – the Parties must work together to tackle the dangers of nuclear proliferation wherever they may arise. In recent years, the NPT has faced significant challenges, particularly from states which have not upheld their obligations and have defied the international community. How we, as Parties to the NPT, choose to respond to these regional challenges will determine whether the NPT will continue to be viewed as the preeminent bulwark against the spread of nuclear weapons.

Make no mistake: the challenges in the Middle East, Northeast Asia and South Asia will not be resolved easily. However, we must not confuse difficulty with fatalism or come to view obstacles as insurmountable. As President Obama stated in his recent speech in Prague, “such fatalism is a deadly adversary, for if we believe that the spread of nuclear weapons is inevitable, then in some way we are admitting to ourselves that the use of nuclear weapons is inevitable.” The United States believes that Parties, working in a collaborative and coordinated manner, *can* resolve these seemingly intractable regional issues and take the world one step closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Chairman, our Delegation first would like to discuss the Middle East. The United States supports fully the objectives of the Resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 Review Conference and will work with all states, within and outside the region, to implement the Resolution’s objectives. The United States believes that a Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems is an achievable goal, but understands that this will not happen overnight, and urges all states to take practical and concrete steps to remove the obstacles to accomplishing this goal.

The United States continues to encourage broad acceptance by all Middle East states of international nonproliferation and disarmament norms. As such, achieving NPT universality remains an objective of U.S. policy, and our cooperation internationally on nuclear technology is governed by our obligations under the NPT, and by the strict standards of U.S. law. Achievement of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East remains a key U.S. foreign policy goal, and movement toward such a peace offers the best prospect for realizing a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. The United States continues to engage intensively with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Arab states in an effort to make progress toward peace and realize the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, existing side by side in peace and security.

The United States is committed to diplomacy that builds constructive relations and addresses the full range of issues before us, including the need for Iran to take the necessary steps to meet its international obligations and regain the trust of the international community. On April 8, the E3+3 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, and the United States) affirmed their shared concerns about Iran’s nuclear program and announced their invitation to the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to meet to pursue a diplomatic solution to this critical issue. The E3+3,

including the United States, are ready to meet with Iran if Iran accepts EU High Representative Solana's invitation on the group's behalf.

The President has stated clearly that he supports direct diplomacy as the preferred means to resolve the international concerns about Iran's nuclear program. The President also has made clear that we do not dispute Iran's right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. But with that right come responsibilities. Iran needs to address the international community's concerns and restore international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

Unfortunately, we have no such confidence at this time. Iran's disregard for five UN Security Council Resolutions calling on it to suspend its enrichment program, and its failure to cooperate fully with the IAEA remain of deep concern to the United States and the international community. Through its very actions, Iran is damaging the NPT's credibility and prospects for both a WMD-free Middle East and NPT universality.

Iran, however, is not the only country in the Middle East to have shown disregard for its NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations. We also call on Syria to cooperate fully with the IAEA investigation into its clandestine nuclear activities. We urge Syria to allow unfettered access to any information, individual or site that the Agency deems essential for it to complete its mandated verification work.

NORTHEAST ASIA

Mr. Chairman, North Korea's nuclear weapons program presents another threat to regional and global security and an additional urgent challenge to the global nonproliferation regime. North Korea's violation of international nonproliferation obligations and norms culminated in its October 9, 2006 nuclear test and was manifested in its clandestine nuclear cooperation with Syria.

North Korea has recently taken steps in the wrong direction, including its April 5 missile test, which violated UN Security Council Resolution 1718, and expulsion of IAEA personnel and the U.S. disablement team. The international community sent a strong signal that the DPRK's launch was unacceptable through the April 13, 2009, UN Security Council Presidential Statement condemning it, as well as through the subsequent action of the UNSCR 1718 Sanctions Committee to designate additional banned weapons-related goods and to designate three North Korean entities for an asset freeze.

We continue to believe that it is in the interest of all parties to pursue the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner, as agreed to in the 2005 Joint Statement at the conclusion of the fourth round of the Six Party Talks. We will continue to work with our allies and partners, especially in the Six-Party framework, to hold North Korea to its commitment to denuclearize. We have valued the Six-Party Talks and the progress that they have achieved, and we urge all Parties to return to the negotiating table. The United States has repeatedly stated that the abandonment of North Korea's nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs could open the way for normalization of U.S.-DPRK relations and a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. This process, however, cannot move forward without North

Korea implementing the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement, leading to the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and to North Korea's return to the NPT and IAEA safeguards as a non-nuclear weapons state.

SOUTH ASIA

The situation in South Asia, Mr. Chairman, poses a further set of unique challenges related to States which do not have NPT obligations. We remain deeply concerned by the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in South Asia, and we do not believe that these weapons enhance regional security. We continue to urge India and Pakistan to exercise nuclear and missile restraint, to bring their export controls in line with the guidelines of the multilateral supplier regimes, and to discuss and implement confidence-building measures designed to reduce regional tensions and diminish the risk that nuclear weapons could be used, either intentionally or accidentally, in a crisis.

We also remain cognizant of our nonproliferation commitments and objectives when considering how to conduct our bilateral relations with any country. Our activities with both India and Pakistan continue to be consistent with our NPT obligations and with our commitment to the Nuclear Suppliers Group Guidelines. We have worked closely with India and with our partners in the NSG and other fora to advance India's participation in nonproliferation regimes. We have welcomed India's commitments and look forward to the entry into force of its Additional Protocol with the IAEA and its safeguards agreement.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, unless Parties collectively take concerted steps to address the unique nonproliferation challenges in the Middle East, Northeast Asia, and South Asia, we risk undermining the effectiveness and credibility of the NPT and of the global nonproliferation regime as a whole. First and foremost, Parties to the Treaty must strive to ensure strict compliance with NPT obligations. Strict compliance with Treaty obligations will reinforce and advance regional stability and security and, in turn, will improve conditions for NPT universality and nuclear disarmament. All Parties bear the responsibility to work actively and continuously to prevent further proliferation by participating in resolute, collective efforts to impede other countries from crossing the nuclear threshold. Such efforts are critical to resolving the unique regional challenges currently facing the Treaty and realizing the achievable goal of genuine NPT universality.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.