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Statement by Stephen Rademaker, United States Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, on Multilateral Arms Control: Time to Opt for Effectiveness, to the First Committee Plenary Session, October 7, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me begin by congratulating you, on behalf of the United States' Delegation, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I am confident that your vast experience will be an asset to the work of this Committee, and I assure you of the full support of our Delegation in the discharge of your duties. I also would like to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman, I would like today to share with the Committee my belief that this Committee can and must reshape itself into an effective multilateral body – one that is relevant to the security threats of today and of the future, and that can meaningfully enhance international peace and security. In order to do so, we must be prepared to make some hard choices regarding our agenda and the way in which we do business.

We meet, Mr. Chairman, at a crossroads for multilateral arms control. In one direction lies the old, Cold War-era thinking that has paralyzed achievable and practical progress in this field for far too long. In these dangerous times, too many nations still orient themselves by the anachronistic coordinates of the past; the results have been years of disappointing drift and growing irrelevance. In seeking to address today's challenges, too many nations continue to rely on the machinery endorsed a quarter-century ago by the First Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament, SSOD I, with no consideration of how to adapt this machinery to address new and emerging threats.

The old direction also has led to impasses and deadlocks that have become routine in some multilateral arms control fora. It has become nearly impossible to deal with a given arms control or disarmament issue without facing demands that other, unrelated subjects be dealt with on an equal basis and at the same time. Recently, the Conference on Disarmament showed signs that its work program stalemate could be lifted. We consider this an encouraging sign, and are considering its ramifications. Obviously, seven years of inactivity there have wrought damage to the reputation of the Conference.

Some believe, Mr. Chairman, that the objective of consensus is to ensure that all proposals have equal weight or are made to be equally acceptable. That kind of thinking, over and over again, proved itself during the Cold War and beyond to be a recipe for inaction and failure, as subjects that do not enjoy consensus simply should not, and cannot, be given equal standing, let alone priority, over subjects that do enjoy consensus.

Too often, a large number of issues are addressed only superficially, as in this Committee, or not addressed at all. While it is appropriate to address all issues of interest to Member States, we need to pay particular emphasis to those issues that can command consensus now. In that manner, we can build gradually and constructively toward the full achievement of our common goals.

Both of these factors -- Cold War thinking and linkages to non-consensus items -- contributed to the failure of the UN Disarmament Commission last spring, where we were unable to reach consensus on either of the two agenda items under consideration after three years of work. These also constitute the root causes for the multi-year stalemate at the Conference on Disarmament.

Now, more than ever, as we face together the many new challenges to international peace and security, the question is whether the UN and the international disarmament machinery can still make a contribution, or will be left behind. We must work to ensure that this Committee takes the road less traveled and becomes, once again, an effective multilateral forum.

The United States, Mr. Chairman, does not believe in multilateralism for its own sake. After all, the UN system itself is a creation of sovereign governments for specific, defined, and delimited purposes. Rather, the United States is committed to an effective multilateralism, properly targeted at today's security threats, contributing in real ways to enhancing international security, and free of political linkages or outmoded Cold War icons.

Please allow me to list a few examples of America's continued commitment to effective multilateralism in the field of arms control and nonproliferation.

- The United States supports efforts to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the NPT, including efforts to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA. We led the effort to increase the IAEA budget, and continue to provide a sizable voluntary contribution to the IAEA. The United States has signed the Additional Protocol for the Application of IAEA Safeguards. President Bush submitted the Protocol to the Senate last year, and we look to formal consideration by the Senate. We urge all other countries to bring an Additional Protocol into force as soon as possible.
- We also continue to meet our obligations under Article VI of the NPT. The United States has dismantled over 13,000 nuclear weapons since the end of the Cold War. We have eliminated more than a dozen different types of warheads. We have reduced the number of nuclear weapons by 60 percent, including 80 percent of our tactical nuclear weapons. Now, with the entry into force earlier this year of the U.S.-Russian Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions, also known as the Moscow Treaty, we will cut the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads again, by about two-thirds to 1,700 to 2,200 by the year 2012. This represents the largest reduction in nuclear forces ever mandated by an arms control treaty. In two decades, we will have eliminated or decommissioned three-quarters of our strategic nuclear arsenal. Also, the United States and Russia will dispose of more than 700 tons of excess fissile material so that it is no longer useable in nuclear weapons, contributing to the irreversibility of nuclear reductions. In addition, the United States maintains its current moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. That having been said, the United States does not support the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and will not become a Party to that treaty.

- The United States has led efforts to pursue alternative approaches to strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention, the BWC. These efforts resulted in an agreed work program at the 2002 resumed Review Conference that established annual meetings of States Parties and groups of experts. The inaugural Experts Meeting concluded at the end of August; preparations are under way for the Annual Meeting of States Parties in November. In our view, the exchange of information among experts on national implementation and biosecurity was valuable. We look forward to the November meeting, and welcome States Parties' efforts to fulfill their national responsibilities to implement and strengthen the BWC.
- The United States also is playing a very active role in efforts to ensure effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the CWC, including efforts to strengthen the international organization responsible for verification, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the OPCW. We were pleased with the positive results of the first Review Conference of the CWC this past May, which reinforced the importance of the Convention and of compliance with it, and mandated several important Action Plans to enhance implementation, currently under preparation. Last year, we made a substantial voluntary financial contribution to enable the OPCW to carry out important activities in verification and implementation assistance. We also are very active in sharing expertise and experience, on request, with other member states as they work to fulfill their national implementation obligations.
- The United States actively participated in the 2003 Group of Governmental Experts on the UN Register of Conventional Arms. The Group recently concluded its work by recommending, for the first time since the founding of the Register in 1992, substantive changes to the Register's existing categories. The Register has been expanded to include MANPADS and artillery between 75 and 100mm. These changes will increase the Register's relevance to international peace and security issues, including the threats of terrorism and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. We were very pleased that discussions in the Group focused on the need to ensure that the Register remains relevant to today's security concerns, and that the Group rose to the challenge.
- The United States also is taking a leading role in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the CCW, Group of Governmental Experts meetings to subject anti-vehicle landmines to the same restrictions as anti-personnel landmines, which are included in the CCW's Amended Mines Protocol.

Mr. Chairman, the international community is seeking to address seriously the problems facing all of us in the fields of multilateral arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation. President Bush spoke to these concerns when he addressed the General Assembly on September 23. While some progress is being made through cooperation among responsible nations, others subvert this effort by refusing to live up to their international obligations. The United States believes that noncompliance with, or inadequate implementation of, existing arms control and nonproliferation treaty regimes is one of the premier threats that this Committee should be addressing today. For this reason, the United States sponsors a biennial resolution on compliance in this Committee, and we were pleased that last year's resolution (UNGA Resolution 57/86) was adopted by consensus. We hope that it will serve as a guide to all States. I want to repeat what I said this past May at the first CWC Review Conference: "My government believes in compliance, not complacency." This is a collective responsibility, requiring States to fulfill their respective commitments to comply, as well as to work to make sure that all other Parties are in compliance with their obligations. We call on all parties to

nonproliferation and arms control treaties not only to honor their commitments, but to hold other Parties to account, as well.

In relevant fora, such as the Fifth BWC Review Conference, the First CWC Review Conference, the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, and at the IAEA, the United States has raised its concerns about non-compliance, and has "named names." As part of our effort to insist on full compliance with relevant arms control and non-proliferation agreements, we have consistently urged the Security Council to act on last February's referral by the IAEA Board of Governors of North Korea's violation of the NPT, and we have been disappointed by the Council's failure to act on this matter. We also are working with other members of the IAEA Board of Governors to support thorough inspections that address the many serious outstanding questions regarding the scope and nature of Iran's clandestine nuclear activities. The mass of evidence arrayed against Iran in the IAEA Director General's past two reports leads to the unequivocal conclusion that Iran is in violation of its Safeguards Agreement and is working hard to cover up that pattern of covert noncompliance. In September, the United States supported the IAEA Board of Governors resolution which has given Iran a final opportunity to redress its behavior before its noncompliance is reported to the UN Security Council. The Board found that it is "essential and urgent" for Iran to remedy its failures and fully cooperate with the IAEA by the end of this month. No one should doubt that it is the hard cases, such as North Korea and Iran, that ultimately will determine the degree to which multilateralism will remain relevant to the security challenges of the 21st Century.

The other paramount threat to global security requiring international attention and action today is that posed by terrorists and non-state actors seeking access to weapons of mass destruction, as well as the states that sponsor such terrorism. Unfortunately, as we all have come to learn, no civilized nation is immune from the barbarity of terrorism. Those who would direct attacks against innocent civilians with conventional weapons should be assumed to be equally willing to commit atrocities with weapons of mass destruction -- a prospect that convinces the United States that this problem must be challenged on every front and defeated in an effective, hopefully multilateral, way. The international community, in our view, has no time to spare and no margin for error in this endeavor.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the First Committee considers more than 50 resolutions and decisions each year. Most of those resolutions originated decades ago, and are repeated year after year with little or no substantive change. As a result, much of the Committee's work has become repetitious and progressively less relevant in view of ongoing changes in the international security environment. This mechanical repetition also overloads the Committee's agenda and, in our view, hinders its ability to focus on the most pressing problems of today.

The United States has been gratified by the overwhelmingly positive response from governments to our non-paper this summer on the need to make multilateral arms control fora such as the Conference on Disarmament and UN Disarmament Commission more effective. This Committee can take actions this year that will provide evidence for all to see of the true commitment of Member States to effective multilateral arms control.

Over the years, there have been a number of efforts to improve the work of the First Committee, but all of those efforts have foundered on the same reefs of Cold War thinking and linkages to non-consensus issues that vex multilateral arms control in general. The perilous times that we live in demand that we rise above linkages and parochial concerns by taking an honest look at how to reform the work of the Committee. We must make it possible to judge proposals on their merits, rather than on how they

affect extraneous issues. One of the most promising reforms that governments have proposed is to streamline the work of the Committee by rotating its consideration of groups of agenda items on a biennial or triennial basis. Some individual resolutions merit yearly reaffirmation, but many more resolutions add little value when introduced on a yearly basis. We need to examine carefully the resolutions that the Committee takes up each year and ask ourselves whether yearly consideration is warranted in each instance, in order to avoid drowning our message in a sea of unnecessary repetition.

Mr. Chairman, as this Committee considers ways that it can make a more substantive contribution to international disarmament, we need to ensure that any efforts that we pursue in this Committee add value to, rather than subtract from or duplicate, important work pending before other UN fora or outside the UN system.

A reduced annual workload, we believe, would permit the First Committee better to address current security threats, such as those arising from non-compliance with existing treaty regimes.

Our Delegation plans to discuss this subject in greater detail during the coming weeks.

Mr. Chairman, the United States will examine closely and with keen interest the debates and outcomes of this year's session of the First Committee. We invite all of you to engage with our Delegation in discussions on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this Committee.

Our Delegation must state in candor, Mr. Chairman, that our Government would not view favorably yet another year of desultory debate and rote reaffirmation by this Committee of the same tired and divisive resolutions of years past. Such inertia could lead to a change in the U.S. approach toward this Committee, and contribute to changes in the U.S. direction at the Conference on Disarmament or the UN Disarmament Commission. If, on the other hand, we succeed collectively in bringing on line a First Committee that is willing and able to act against today's threats, the universally welcomed results will be not only effective multilateralism, but also enhanced peace and security for all UN Member States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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