

United States General Debate Speech, Oct 25, 2006

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Our Delegation is very pleased to see the representative of a close friend and ally in the chair. All Member States recognize the leading role that Norway has played in promoting efforts to modernize the United Nations and make it a more effective organization. We are confident that this Committee will prosper under your direction, and pledge our support for your endeavors.

Our Delegation hopes that the Chair and the other members of the Bureau, to whom we extend our congratulations, will lead the Member States in securing the endorsement by the General Assembly this year of the agenda clusters that this Committee adopted by consensus in 2004. We believe that their implementation would contribute further to improving the effectiveness of the methods of work of this Committee, as the General Assembly envisioned when it adopted Resolutions 58/41 and 59/95 by consensus, and which the United States had the honor to sponsor.

In this regard, we take this opportunity to recall for delegations the difficulties that the recent Secretariat practice of presenting Program Budget Implication Statements orally, rather than in written form, has posed for the Member States. All delegations benefit from the ability to make informed and considered decisions on all budgetary matters. Accordingly, our Delegation respectfully calls on our colleagues in the Secretariat to ensure that PBI statements, even when they report no additional spending, are circulated sufficiently in advance to permit delegations to assess them properly. Perhaps the Chair and the Bureau could use their good offices to that end.

Madam Chair, governments in the future well may view 2006 as a watershed year. After far too many years of inaction, the Security Council finally began to address the threats that the nuclear weapon programs of Iran and North Korea pose to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Also, the Conference on Disarmament, which has spent most of the past decade on fruitless procedural wrangling, has devoted itself this year to

serious substantive discussions -- not yet negotiations, but substantive, nonetheless -- as it seeks to break free of the political linkages that, for nearly ten years, have prevented the Conference from carrying out its responsibilities as the principal multilateral negotiating forum for arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament agreements.

What conclusions can we draw from developments in Geneva this year? First, that the CD does not need to establish subsidiary bodies in order to examine in depth all issues of interest to its Member States. Second, that only one item before the Conference currently is ripe for negotiation, namely, a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. Our Delegation recalls the words of the Secretary-General when he addressed the CD on June 21:

*Quote: It is long overdue for this negotiating body to abandon the all-consuming linkages that have dominated your approach in recent years, and get down to substantive work. I do not discount the difficulty that you face in settling long-standing differences, especially over nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances. Yet those difficulties pale in significance, when measured against the immense challenges that the global community faces in the broader sphere on non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. End quote.*

The early negotiation by the CD of an FMCT is particularly important, Madam Chair, because the world community today faces no greater security challenge than the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. In the hands of rogue states or terrorists, nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons could inflict massive harm on innocent civilians and on the entire international community. To that end, the United States has taken the lead in offering a treaty that should lead to negotiations.

The United States in recent years has collaborated with like-minded governments on a series of innovative approaches to deal with nonproliferation. We have drawn on existing institutions, such as: the Security Council and its 1540 activities; existing groups of states, such as the G-8 and the Global Partnership; and ad hoc coalitions, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative. Let us review recent developments relating to these activities.

Madam Chair, the reduction and prevention of the worldwide proliferation threat remain critically important. The United States is committed to the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program and similar efforts, and devotes significant resources to these programs, challenging other nations to match our commitment to disarmament and nonproliferation.

The United States contributes over one billion dollars each year toward threat reduction and nonproliferation programs. Today, some two dozen donors, including the United States, have pledged over seventeen billion dollars toward the Partnership's twenty-billion-dollar target.

The United States also works closely with Russia to secure vulnerable nuclear materials and eliminate excess weapon-grade materials. At the Bratislava summit in 2005, President Bush and President Putin agreed to accelerate those efforts and to complete security upgrades by the end of 2008.

Building on these nuclear security efforts, President Bush and President Putin on July 15 launched the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Under this initiative, we seek to build an international coalition of nations committed to cooperate to:

- Improve accounting, control, and physical protection of nuclear material and radioactive substances;
- Detect and suppress illicit trafficking;
- Respond to, and mitigate the consequences of, acts of nuclear terrorism;
- Ensure that states take all possible measures to deny safe haven to terrorists seeking to acquire or use nuclear materials; and
- Strengthen our respective national legal frameworks to ensure the effective prosecution of terrorists and of those who facilitate terrorism.

In addition to the nuclear threat, threats from biological and chemical weapons also continue to be of concern. The Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention have undertaken national efforts to establish and enhance implementation measures, including penal legislation, pathogen security, and disease surveillance in cases of alleged use or unusual outbreaks. Similarly, lessons learned from technical assistance visits in capitals of Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention Parties will be of

great value in providing assistance to other Treaty Parties. Such efforts, of course, help the Parties to the two Conventions fulfill their obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1540. We look forward to agreement during the upcoming BWC Review Conference and CWC Conference of the States Parties to continue these real-world efforts to curb these growing threats.

Not all is good news, however, Madam Chair. As delegations are aware, the nuclear nonproliferation regime continues to face significant challenges from North Korea and Iran. In both instances, the United States is pursuing multilateral diplomacy, in concert with friends and allies, to address these challenges. Increasing emphasis by the international community on nonproliferation and compliance in multilateral fora and multinational arrangements will bring, over time, a much needed paradigm shift in the global nuclear nonproliferation regime.

The United States is seriously concerned about Tuesday's announcement by the North Korean government of its intention to undertake a nuclear test. Such an action would be directly contrary to the interests of all of North Korea's neighbors and to peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. We will work with Japan, South Korea, and all our partners to register our opposition to this provocative announcement.

The United States and its Six Party partners seek the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful, diplomatic means.

We continue to strive for implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement, which resulted from the Six Party Talks and which offers North Korea a clear path to a positive future and concrete benefits in return for carrying out its commitment to denuclearize.

We continue to work with our Six Party partners to bring the North Koreans back to the talks, most recently offering a Six Party Ministerial meeting in Malaysia to allow the North Koreans a high-level venue in which to express their concerns.

We call on all five members of the Six Party Talks and the United Nations Security Council -- as stated in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1695 -- to exert every effort to persuade North Korea that the test of a nuclear weapon would only bring its further isolation and would not be in the interest of the North Korean people.

To our disappointment, North Korea continues to reject these efforts, refuses to carry out its commitment in the September 2005 Joint Statement to denuclearize, and has refused to return to the Six Party Talks for 11 months.

A North Korean test of a nuclear weapon would severely undermine our confidence in North Korea's commitment to denuclearization and to the Six Party Talks and would pose a threat to peace and security in Asia and the world. A provocative action of this nature would only further isolate the North Korean regime and deny the people of the North the benefits offered to them in the Six Party Talks that they so rightly deserve.

The United States will continue to work with its allies and partners to discourage such a reckless action and will respond appropriately. We stand firmly with our allies in the region and reaffirm our commitment to their security.

In the case of Iran, on July 31, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1696. That resolution demands that Iran suspend all enrichment related and reprocessing activities and calls upon Iran to take the steps that the IAEA Board deemed necessary. The deadline for Iran's compliance was August 31. The international community has presented that regime with a choice between two fundamentally different courses. The negative choice is for Tehran to maintain its current course, pursuing nuclear weapons in defiance of its international obligations. If Iran does so, it will face further international isolation, and sanctions.

Iran's failure to comply with UNSC Resolution 1696 gives a clear mandate to adopt a Chapter VII sanctions resolution. The Council expressed its intention to pursue measures under Article 41 of the Charter as part of the July resolution.

The positive and constructive choice is for the Iranian regime to alter its present course and comply with UNSC Resolution 1696. This path would yield significant benefits for the Iranian people included peaceful nuclear energy.

Our Delegation takes this opportunity to express the deep disappointment of the United States that the Asian Group here in New York designated Iran as a vice-chair of the Disarmament Commission last April and that the Middle East and South Asia Group in Vienna designated Iran as

a vice-chair of the General Committee at the IAEA General Conference just last month. Treating Tehran as a member in good standing of the community of nations sends that regime and the international community precisely the wrong message about Iran's continued disregard for its NPT and IAEA obligations.

Madam Chair, the First Committee this year has the opportunity to use the enhanced mechanisms that delegations have put in place since 2003 to strengthen the international security dialogue. We all must do our best to set aside our differences and come together to express, as strongly as we can, the determination of the international community to thwart the aims of those who would rend asunder the nuclear nonproliferation regime, and thereby undermine our common security. Our Delegation looks forward to working with like-minded delegations to achieve this objective.

Thank you, Madam Chair.