

U.S. Statement to the Conference on Disarmament

June 12, 2007

I take the floor today to express the United States' support for your efforts, Madame President.

We share the frustration expressed by many over the past few weeks in regards to the CD's current stalemate. Unilateral, bilateral, and other multilateral arms control and disarmament efforts have far outpaced the CD in recent years, which has led many to question the body's legitimacy. Movement over recent months left the United States hopeful that the conference was on the brink of starting substantive work, including the drafting of an FMCT. As we have stated before, we understand that L1 is the best possible compromise and as such leaves many delegations, including ours, wishing for more. But we recognize it as the best chance to move this body forward.

We acknowledge the urgency in the need to increase cooperative efforts to confront the real threats to international security and are ready to get to work. Madame President, our delegation appreciates your candor and efforts to mobilize the conference, at a time when most delegations hold negative perceptions of the fate of this session of the CD.

Yet, even with the current deadlock, the United States has many reasons to remain positive. In that regard, let me share with you an announcement made in Washington last week.

As you know, in 2004 President Bush directed the size of the nuclear weapons stockpile be reduced by 50 percent by 2012, resulting in the smallest stockpile since the 1950's. Last week, the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) announced that it had increased the rate of nuclear weapons dismantlements by 50 percent over last year's level, and will continue at the sharply higher rate for the rest of the year. At the beginning of fiscal year 2007, NNSA established a goal to increase the dismantlement rate of retired nuclear weapons by nearly 50 percent, but because of dramatic improvements in procedures, tools and policies NNSA was able to reach this goal four months ahead of schedule.

Once these weapons are dismantled, the plutonium will be placed in highly secure storage, until a facility is constructed and operating to turn the material into fuel to be burned. This plutonium disposition program, based on the 2000 nonproliferation agreement between Russia and the United States, aims to eliminate 68 metric tons of weapon-grade plutonium in both countries by the end of 2007.

Dismantling nuclear weapons is complex and expensive. In order to increase its dismantlement capacity, NNSA made substantial investments in previous years across the nuclear weapons complex to hire additional technicians, purchase the right equipment and tools, and develop better safety and security procedures. As a result of the increase in dismantlements and reductions, today's stockpile is one-quarter of its size at the end of the Cold War.

The United States remains hopeful, because it is making its own efforts in nuclear disarmament. We will not stand still on the issue of reducing nuclear weapons pending some multilateral agreement. We are taking the necessary steps to reduce our stockpile of nuclear weapons in efforts to make the world a safer place for all.

The CD has the potential to be part of the action in this goal. The U.S. will continue to support the initiatives in the CD and keep hope that substantive work will soon end this hiatus, but we will also continue to participate in cooperative efforts elsewhere to advance common goals and strengthen international peace and security.

Thank-you Madame President..