Mr. President, friends and colleagues:

Let me start by picking up the words of our colleague, Amb. Woolcott, on the Arms Trade Treaty and thank him again for his work in chairing the conference that produced this treaty. I was pleased to convey recently our official commendation and thanks for his efforts.

It is a particular pleasure to make my final statement in the CD during the Indonesian Presidency. I took a seminar on Indonesian politics my freshman year of college and the study of that fascinating nation helped spark my interest in a foreign service career. So, after 38 years in the diplomatic service, I feel as if I have come full circle.

I must begin by thanking the Secretariat, in particular, my old friend, our distinguished Secretary General Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Of course, that includes the interpreters who put up with my long-windedness for more than three years. Thanks to UNIDIR and its director, Theresa Hitchens, for their efforts to facilitate disarmament negotiations. I’d like to express appreciation to our civil society partners, in particular, Reaching Critical Will, which provides an extraordinary service as our unpaid archivist and also functions as our
everyday critic. Thank you all for your counsel and friendship over the last several years.

Finally, I would like to thank our distinguished President, Ambassador Wibowo, and his team, for their work in trying again to forge a way forward for this body. It is unfortunate that those efforts did not bear fruit and this body should usefully pause at this next juncture in order to reflect on why, and what can be done in future. For the U.S., CD 1864 is still the one Program of Work that commanded consensus and remains for us the touchstone for a balanced and comprehensive approach.

Although I cannot end this assignment satisfied with the state of affairs in the Conference on Disarmament, which has been all too long unable to fulfill its negotiating mandate, I am by nature an optimist. I believe I share with most of us here today a stubborn determination that the work will go on to find a way forward. It must, since we all agree on the vital importance of our task.

I will soon be returning to my home in Washington where I hope as many as possible of you will visit me. When you do, you will see that I live a stone’s throw from American University in the District of Columbia, our nation’s capital. That venue is much on my mind today. Fifty years ago on that campus, President John F. Kennedy gave one of his finest speeches which bears directly on the endeavors which unite us in this body today. Little more than a half year after the nearly apocalyptic Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, in that speech delivered down the street from my home, Kennedy reached out to the Soviet Union in a determined effort to find a new path forward. He announced a moratorium on atmospheric nuclear tests and the goal of negotiating a
nuclear test ban treaty. These were key developments. Let me share with you as well some of Kennedy’s more general thoughts on the need to reshape the world with a new vision. It is that vision that continues to inspire my President, Barack Hussein Obama.

Kennedy asked “what kind of a peace do I mean?” “Not the peace of the grave,” he said, “not merely peace in our time but peace for all time.” “I speak of peace,” he said “because of the new face of war.” “All we have built, all we have worked for, would be destroyed in the first 24 hours,” said the President. I can think of no clearer recognition by the U.S. of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons than that stark statement made 50 years ago.

You have often heard us speak of our belief that the way to a world without nuclear weapons is a series of mutually reinforcing steps. Progress has never been, nor probably ever will be, fast enough to satisfy us all. We justifiably point out the vast nuclear reductions made by the US which has brought down nuclear arsenals by 85 percent since the height of the Cold War. But of course that does not mean complacency and we welcome the energy and commitment of our partners in civil society and academia. I also note how President Obama has expanded this essential work on state arsenals to focus as well on the ongoing work to secure nuclear materials from non-state actors’ with malign intent. Nor can we relax our focus on non-proliferation and the absolute need for compliance with international obligations.

However impatient we may be, let us not lose sight of the progress that has been made, is being made and will be made. As Kennedy said 50
years ago “Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts.” He pointed to our long-range goal in Geneva of “general and complete disarmament’ (a phrase subsequently enshrined in Article VI of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty) and said that this would take place by stages. That is our continuing belief. I know of course that others may see a different path that would short cut admittedly painstaking, if not tortuous, negotiations, work that we see as essential both on a bilateral and multilateral basis. As we debate here and elsewhere on HOW we advance on that path, however, let us remember what UNITES those of us who genuinely seek a world without nuclear weapons.

So, my fellow diplomats, let me conclude with yet another reference to that great call for disarmament made by President Kennedy at American University: ”however dim the prospects may be today, we intend to continue this effort – to continue it in order that all countries, including our own, can better grasp what the problems and possibilities of disarmament are.”

Good bye, good luck and good service in our common cause.