

**Statement by the United States in Cluster 1: Disarmament**

**Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the  
2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the  
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

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**Wednesday, April 25, 2018**

Mr. Chairman,

The international community has struggled for decades with the problem of how to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. While we have made great progress, the long-term goal remains elusive. Focusing on numerical reductions and the immediate abolition of nuclear weapons, without addressing the real underlying security concerns that led to their production and retention, however will advance neither the cause of disarmament nor the cause of enhanced collective international security.

To move past the sterility of such discourse, the United States seeks a more meaningful and realistic dialogue, one that has a genuine prospect of moving us toward the nuclear weapons-free world we collectively seek. Such a dialogue would seek ways to address those underlying security concerns that continue to make the retention of nuclear weapons necessary to deter major power conflict and maintain strategic stability. Our goal is progress, not rhetoric, nor is it shallow virtue-signaling; as a result the choice of a constructive dialogue is clear.

The United States has spoken in broad terms on many occasions now – and we have emphasized at this PrepCom – the need to create the conditions conducive to further nuclear disarmament. The approach I will describe is not intended to be a “roadmap” or a timetable, identifying a particular sequence or time to accomplish such tasks, nor is it meant to be an exhaustive list of all needed actions. Rather, it is meant to foster a thematic dialogue on the improvements that all states must work together to accomplish in order to ensure that disarmament has a future. We have submitted a working paper on this topic and I encourage everyone here to read it.

Mr. Chairman,

We firmly believe that most nations aspire to live in a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous world – a world in which states feel secure within their borders, unthreatened by their neighbors. This would be a world in which the relationships between nations, especially the major powers, are not driven by assumptions of zero-sum geopolitical competition, self-aggrandizement, or hegemonism but are instead cooperative and free of conflict. In this world we envision, nuclear deterrence would no longer be considered necessary as the ultimate guarantee of security.

But that world is not simply today's troubled world absent nuclear weapons. It will only be possible when a fundamental shift in the geopolitical landscape has brought about security conditions in which all states conclude, based on their own sovereign threat perceptions, that nuclear weapons are no longer required. That will, of course, be a very long process. In the interim, progress in improving the international security environment can enable further progress on reducing the role and numbers of nuclear weapons throughout the world. That is the lesson of history.

The ending of the nuclear arms race in the closing years of the Cold War was possible as a result of the shifting environment of that era; likewise, the reductions in the years following the Cold War were also made possible by significant improvement in that security environment. Both of these time periods yielded significant progress in reducing nuclear dangers precisely because leaders could respond to improvements in the prevailing security conditions. Such benign security conditions no longer exist due to many factors, including violations of existing treaty regimes by Russia, Syria, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Chairman,

Nuclear deterrence, including extended nuclear deterrence, continues to play a central role in ensuring the global stability and security from which all states benefit. And stability in all its forms – including economic, social, and strategic – contributes to confidence and security in ways that can help facilitate further disarmament. All NPT Parties bear responsibility for working together to improve the geopolitical environment and create the conditions for nuclear disarmament, that is, to take the “CCND Approach,” as we refer to it. This practical approach to disarmament diplomacy envisions all NPT Parties contributing to efforts to ameliorate conflicts and rivalries that lead to the continued reliance on nuclear deterrence. The Preamble of the NPT refers to the “easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between States in order to facilitate” disarmament. This concept of easing tension between and among states, including through effective measures that build trust and confidence, is the necessary starting point to help create the conditions needed for further progress on nuclear disarmament, in accordance with Article VI of the NPT. This is the intellectual foundation of our approach to disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

A moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices by all countries possessing nuclear weapons is also an essential step.

The United States has concluded its review of the proposed Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), and I can report to you that the United States will continue to support the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT. There is, however, one reason why this effort is currently stalled: a select few states continue to produce fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, or at least are not prepared to forego that option. For our part, the United States has maintained a unilateral moratorium on such production for decades, and the United Kingdom, France, and Russia currently also have similar moratoria in place. As an interim measure to beginning negotiations, the United States calls on all states that have not yet done so – and we all know who they are – to declare a moratorium on such production. The hard reality is that FMCT negotiations will not begin until the remaining key states are prepared to cap their stocks of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Similarly, halting the further increase in nuclear arsenals of all states that possess such weapons would serve to create confidence that could lead to progress on the reduction of nuclear arsenals. Although the United States has reduced its nuclear arsenal by 88 percent since its Cold War peak, others have moved in the opposite direction. Russia, China, and North Korea are currently increasing their stockpiles and diversifying their capabilities. Nuclear stockpiles and capabilities are also expanding elsewhere in Asia in ways hardly consistent with giving nuclear disarmament a viable future.

In addition, improving transparency about nuclear policies, plans, and doctrines would be a critical confidence-building measure that could help facilitate, as well as to inform, future arms control initiatives, and perhaps indeed further negotiated nuclear weapons reductions. As the 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review notes, “Arms control efforts must now emphasize confidence and security building measures to rebuild trust and communication. We are prepared to consider arms control opportunities that return parties to predictability and transparency, and remain receptive to future arms control negotiations if conditions permit and the potential outcome improves the security of the United States and its allies and partners.”

Mr. Chairman,

Finally, I want to underscore the importance of three final issues. First, an essential element of creating the conditions for future nuclear disarmament will be ensuring that we have the capability and capacity to verify any potential reductions. Second, even a clear prohibition,

coupled with a detailed plan for weapons elimination and robust verification provisions, would not be enough unless the international community can be counted on to enforce compliance in an effective and timely way. Third, and foremost in this context, an effective nuclear nonproliferation regime is essential – now – to help build conditions for further progress on disarmament, and in the long term to ensure that the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons is stable and secure.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, all nations can and should work to create the conditions essential for further nuclear disarmament negotiations. Doing so will help to fashion a world in which nuclear weapons are no longer necessary to deter aggression and maintain global strategic stability. As we seek this lofty objective, to which the NPT has made an immeasurable contribution over the last 50 years, the United States looks forward to engaging with all States Party on these important issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.