United States of America

Statement by:

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Thematic Discussion on Nuclear Weapons

Compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and commitments

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At this year’s First Committee session, the United States is once again sponsoring its traditional resolution on “Compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and commitments.” I have asked for the floor today to introduce this draft resolution under agenda item 98, “General and Complete Disarmament.” We believe this resolution can make a useful contribution in reflecting the commitment of the international community to acting together to strengthen such compliance.

This resolution was last considered in 2008. In December of that year, in Resolution 63/59, the UN General Assembly acknowledged by an overwhelming majority vote the importance of compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and other related legally-binding commitments.

The importance in advancing such compliance is shared by all the sponsors. Of particular note from the U.S. perspective, I recall that in Prague in April 2009, President Obama called on all states to comply with their obligations and to hold other states accountable for their actions. He emphasized specifically that “Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something.”

Today, over two years later, the issue of compliance remains of fundamental importance. There is broad consensus that compliance with multilateral and international treaties, agreements and other obligations and commitments undertaken by UN Member States to prevent weapons of mass destruction
proliferation and to regulate and/or reduce armaments is critical to international peace and stability.

Indeed, confidence in compliance with such treaties, agreements, obligations, and commitments is a central element of the international security architecture and a requirement for continued progress towards disarmament.

Further, there is broad recognition of the importance of building national, regional, and international capacity for effective verification of compliance with, and enforcement for violations of, multilateral nonproliferation obligations consistent with the Charter of the United Nations. By way of example, I wish to cite the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which in Actions 26 and 27 underscore the importance of addressing all outstanding cases of noncompliance with safeguards obligations and calls upon IAEA member states to extend their full cooperation.

The key objective in sponsoring this measure again this year is to reflect and strengthen that international consensus.

Mr. Chairman, let me say a little bit about the resolution that the United States and our co-sponsors are proposing. It would update and only slightly revise the Compliance Resolution that the UN General Assembly adopted in 2008. Specifically, this year’s resolution would ensure that the measure is maintained as an item on the sixth-ninth UN General Assembly’s agenda. This year’s resolution would also draw upon language contained in the 2002 Compliance Resolution (57/86), which was adopted by consensus, to emphasize the importance of cooperation in increasing confidence in compliance.

In this regard, I would like to recall that the United States and many of the resolution co-sponsors continue to work with and assist others, including through the work of the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 Committee and the implementing organs of existing treaties, to meet their relevant arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament commitments.

Mr. Chairman, like its predecessors, this year’s resolution would acknowledge the widespread recognition within the international community of the impact of noncompliance challenges on international peace and stability and of diplomacy as a tool to encourage a return to compliance by states not currently in compliance. Its adoption would be another concrete example of the international community’s determination to use diplomacy to advance compliance.
Holding states accountable for failing to comply with nonproliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and commitments strengthens not only confidence in the integrity of the agreements and commitments, but also in the prospects for progress toward achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, failure to hold states accountable for their actions undercuts not only the integrity of agreements and commitments, but also the prospects for future progress. Such failure would only pave the way for other states to follow the path of willful noncompliance and undermine the authority of the relevant nonproliferation treaties. It would also dilute the benefits states have come to expect when they adhere to such agreements.

Mr. Chairman, the United States has no illusions that advancing compliance will be easy. We know that sometimes progress will be slow and setbacks will occur. And often there are no easy answers to noncompliance issues that we face. However, we also know that advancing this cause together is the only way we can succeed.

It is in this spirit that we hope all nations represented here will join in supporting this year’s draft resolution on compliance. After all, supporting compliance with treaties, agreements, obligations, and commitments freely undertaken is something we should all be able to endorse.

We ask all states to support this year’s resolution. This resolution is open for co-sponsorship and we are hoping for a larger number of co-sponsors than we had when this resolution was last introduced. Those delegations which have not yet been approached about co-sponsorship, and who wish to do so, should contact any member of the U.S. delegation. We hope that this year we can once again return to consensus adoption of this important resolution.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, our Delegation looks forward to collaborating successfully with other delegations on this draft resolution, as well as on the other work of this session.