Remarks by the Honorable Rose E. Gottemoeller  
Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance  
Delegation of the United States of America  
First (Disarmament and International Security) Committee  
United Nations General Assembly  
New York, New York  
October 4, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to deliver remarks on behalf of the U.S. Delegation. Congratulations to the Chair and the newly elected members of the Bureau. The United States pledges its support for your efforts to direct a productive 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee.

Mr. Chairman, my Delegation hopes to build on last year’s productive session and the successes of the past year, as we all work together on a balanced, realistic approach to multilateral arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation.

The path from Prague was fast and straight and the first tasks along the way were long overdue or clear on the horizon. The path is now starting to move into uncharted terrain. The United States is committed to blazing new trails, to pushing forward with momentum.

New START Treaty

The New START Treaty entered into force on February 5th of this year. Implementation of the Treaty is going well and contributes positively to the U.S.-Russian relationship. The treaty represents an important step on the path towards a world without nuclear weapons.

I’m very pleased that my colleague from Russia will join me later in the session to present a joint briefing on our successful implementation of the New START Treaty. As one Treaty provides a foundation for the next, we believe this vital cooperation will set the stage for further, deeper reductions.

We are also pleased to report that Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Lavrov exchanged Diplomatic Notes on July 13 of this year, bringing the U.S.-Russia Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA) and its Protocols into
force. PMDA commits each country to dispose of no less than 34 metric tons of excess weapon-grade plutonium, which represents enough material for approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons.

Nonproliferation

Mr. Chairman, the United States has made great progress over the last year in our efforts to stem proliferation. We are actively working to implement the Action Plan adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, seeking to strengthen all three pillars of the Treaty.

In May 2011, President Obama submitted the protocols of the African and South Pacific nuclear-weapon-free zones treaties to the U.S. Senate for its advice and consent. And we are in discussion with parties to the Southeast Asia and Central Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties in an effort to reach agreement that would allow the United States to sign the Protocols to those treaties.

The IAEA safeguards system is the essential underpinning of the nonproliferation regime, providing the necessary assurances regarding the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The United States, along with other Member States and the IAEA Secretariat, are carrying out a range of measures to strengthen that system, including universalizing the Additional Protocol. We seek to cooperate with other NPT Parties on ways to discourage states from violating the Treaty and then withdrawing from it.

Ensuring global nuclear security is a related challenge. We were glad to host a Summit last year in which 47 world leaders endorsed the goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear material within four years. We are actively preparing for a follow-on summit in 2012, to be hosted by the Republic of Korea.

The United States will continue its active effort to fulfill its commitments under Article IV of the NPT to international peaceful nuclear cooperation with states that abide by their nonproliferation obligations, including through the Peaceful Uses Initiative Secretary Clinton announced at the RevCon last year. The worldwide expansion of nuclear power must not be accompanied by an increased threat of nuclear proliferation.
Compliance

Compliance with treaties and agreements is a central element of the international security architecture and critical to peace and stability worldwide. At this year’s First Committee session, the United States will once again sponsor its resolution on “Compliance with non-proliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and commitments.”

This year’s Compliance Resolution, like its predecessors, acknowledges the widespread consensus within the international community that noncompliance challenges international peace and stability. We ask for your support of this year’s resolution.

BWC and CWC

Mr. Chairman, like many others in this hall, the United States is preparing for the 7th BWC Review Conference to be held in December. We see the conference as an opportunity to bolster the Biological Weapons Convention, to take on the challenge of encouraging scientific progress, but constraining the potential for misuse.

We will ask for member states to come together and focus on new ways to enhance confidence in compliance through richer transparency, more effective implementation, an improved set of confidence building measures, and cooperative use of the BWC’s consultative provisions. We need to work together, moreover, on measures to counter the threat of bioterrorism, and to detect and respond effectively to an attack should one occur.

Regarding the Chemical Weapons Convention, the United States is proud of the progress made towards a world free of chemical weapons. The progress to date is the result of the combined efforts of the 188 Member States of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). For our part, the United States continues to make steady progress in destroying our chemical weapons. By April of 2012, we anticipate having destroyed 90% of our stockpile. The remaining 10% will be destroyed while assigning highest priority to ensuring the safety of people, protecting the environment, and complying with national standards for safety and emissions, as called for in the Convention.
Efforts Toward Future Goals

Mr. Chairman, although some important work is behind us, the United States is not standing still. We are preparing for the next steps in arms control and disarmament.

When he signed the New START Treaty, President Obama made it clear that the United States is committed to continuing a step-by-step process to reduce the overall number of nuclear weapons, including the pursuit of a future agreement with Russia for broad reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons – strategic, non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed.

To prepare the way, the United States is reviewing our strategic requirements and developing options for the future of our nuclear stockpile. NATO is also reviewing its deterrence and defense posture. While this work is proceeding, the United States is ready for serious discussion with Russia of the conceptual, definitional and technical issues that will face us in the next phases of negotiation.

Furthermore, as President Obama has said, the United States is committed to securing ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and we are engaging the United States Senate and the American public on the merits of the Treaty. As we move forward with our process, we call on all governments to declare or reaffirm their commitment not to conduct explosive nuclear tests. We thank and congratulate Ghana and Guinea for ratifying the Treaty in the last year. We ask that the remaining Annex 2 States join us in moving forward toward ratification.

At the Article XIV Conference last month, Under Secretary Ellen Tauscher said “we do not expect that the path remaining to entry into force will be traveled quickly or easily...but move ahead we will, because we know that the CTBT will benefit the security of the United States and that of the world.”

The United States also is eager to begin the negotiation of a verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT).

Though we believe that the Conference on Disarmament (CD) is the best-suited international body for negotiating a multilateral arms control agreement, we’ve made no secret of our frustration with the CD’s current impasse with FMCT - a frustration shared by many countries. While Secretary Clinton told the CD our
patience is not unlimited, we are encouraged that the P5 is renewing joint efforts to move the CD to FMCT negotiations.

The P5 have been conducting consultations and will include additional countries going forward; we plan to meet again during the UNGA First Committee. This process needs time to develop. Resolving the issues that have stalled the CD will be complicated, but we believe this course of action has the best potential to move the CD to action on the FMCT in 2012.

P5 Efforts

Mr. Chairman, a development of great importance to the United States is the start of a regular, multilateral dialogue among the P5. The P5 are committed to the implementation of the Action Plan that was adopted by consensus at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. A constructive step in this direction took place at the June conference in Paris, when the P5 met to discuss transparency, verification, and confidence-building measures.

All the P5 states recognize the fundamental importance of transparency in building mutual understanding and confidence. In Paris, we exchanged information on nuclear doctrine and capabilities and discussed possible voluntary transparency and confidence-building measures. And we conferred on steps taken to implement our Article VI commitment, including reporting, a topic of great interest to the NPT community and one for which the P5 acknowledges a special responsibility. We are preparing to inform the 2014 NPT PrepCom on our approaches to reporting.

To ensure a continuing process, the P5 approved in Paris the creation of a working group on Nuclear Definitions and Terminology. We also discussed the technical challenges associated with verification, and will continue our discussion by holding expert level technical consultations on this subject, the first in the United Kingdom, between now and the next P5 Conference. This Conference will be held in the context of the 2012 NPT PrepCom.

Mr. Chairman, let me stress that we are entering unknown terrain. We face verification challenges that have never before been addresssed. As the size of nuclear arsenals decrease, verification becomes more complex. The margins for error increase. We are determined to find ways to overcome these challenges, for we believe transparency will be more important than ever.
The United States is proud to be at the leading edge of transparency efforts – publicly declaring our nuclear stockpile numbers; participating in voluntary and treaty-based inspections measures; working with other nations on military to military, scientific and lab exchanges, and site visits; and frequently briefing others on our nuclear programs and disarmament efforts.

We hope that all countries will join in the common effort to increase transparency and build mutual confidence. Progress on arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation demands nothing less.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, we hope that our colleagues have found this overview informative. The U.S. delegation plans to address many aspects of this year’s agenda, and in greater detail, during our interactive dialogues. I can assure you that the United States will tenaciously pursue our significant goals in disarmament and international security.

We are eager to hear the statements of our colleagues and we look forward to cooperating with other delegations on this year’s draft resolutions and decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.