Statement of the Delegation of the
United States of America
to the Regional Disarmament and Security
Segment of Thematic Debate
in the First Committee of the Sixty-seventh Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

(Submitted for the Record)

As an Atlantic and Pacific state, the United States has an enduring interest in maintaining peace and prosperity across many regions. We have seen the value of strengthening partnerships and cooperation with regional and other inter-governmental organizations. We have seen the fruits of our labors in regions that have enjoyed almost unparalleled periods of peace, prosperity, and stability. These efforts are most effective only when regional parties meet their commitments fully.

Many delegations have mentioned proliferation crises in the Middle East and Northeast Asia and concerns over strategic stability in South Asia. Other regions are making progress, for example, in consolidating nuclear-weapon-free zones, as we have noted in an earlier statement. The United States also shares the goal of a WMD free zone in the Middle East, freely arrived at by the countries of the region that have primary responsibility for realizing this goal. We have been working with fellow NPT depositaries in support of Middle East Conference facilitator Laajava’s efforts, but the impetus for a WMD free zone must come from the region.

The United States has played a significant role, alongside our European partners, in post-Cold War Europe. We have made a serious investment in building the current security architecture in Europe. Each regime – the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE), the Treaty on Open Skies, and the Vienna Document 2011 on confidence- and security-building measures – is important and contributes to security and stability in a unique way, but when they are working in harmony and implemented fully, the result is greater confidence for all of Europe. The very successful Open Skies Treaty, which entered into force ten years ago, is one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts to date to promote openness and transparency in military forces and activities. The observation flights serve to enhance military transparency and provide an opportunity for representatives of the 34 signatories – in most cases, military personnel – to regularly and effectively work together.
The Vienna Document, with its confidence and security building measures, which apply to all 56 participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, contributes to Europe-wide confidence and reassurance by promoting greater military transparency. It is also a useful template for other regions, as they look to build confidence in the military intentions of their neighbors. With roots in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, we are actively engaged with our partners to modernize the Vienna Document to make it more relevant for 21st century military capabilities and security realities. Going forward we have two goals in mind: we want to strengthen existing provisions and we want to ensure that the Document remains relevant to today’s security challenges and budget realities in Europe.

If we look back over the course of the CFE Treaty’s implementation, the regime has been a historic success story, eliminating more than 72,000 pieces of Cold War military equipment since its entry into force. Thousands of inspections have taken place at military sites all over Europe, dramatically increasing confidence and military transparency. The CFE regime remains important to the United States, and for European security as a whole, despite the fact that Russia ceased implementation of its CFE obligations in December 2007. After trying for several years to convince Russia to resume implementation, in November 2011, the United States and our NATO Allies that are party to the Treaty, as well as Georgia and Moldova, ceased carrying out certain obligations under the CFE Treaty with regard to Russia. Since that step, we are consulting with allies and partners about the lessons learned from the implementation of CFE and other existing agreements and how arms control can most effectively address 21st century challenges.

The fact is, the problem addressed by the CFE Treaty originally – the destabilizing surplus of conventional arms on the continent – has been resolved, in no small part through implementation of this important treaty. Today, for the most part, quantities of conventional armaments across the European continent are way below the negotiated ceilings, and are likely to continue to drop. While the global security environment has changed significantly since 1989, conventional arms control, when done right, can significantly improve security on the continent and provide confidence regarding the military forces and intentions of neighbors, especially in sensitive areas. We must devote adequate resources to keep the arms control regimes going strong. We must adapt and improve our efforts to meet our current and future security needs, and do it in a way that is efficient and effective for all countries involved.
The United States sees great value in collaborative approaches across the whole spectrum of our arms control initiatives in Europe and beyond. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program initiated by Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar after the fall of the Soviet Union was a success story with regard to safeguarding the materials, facilities, and expertise needed to develop WMD. Under the CTR program in Russia, we have successfully partnered to deactivate nuclear warheads, implement security upgrades at nuclear storage sites, neutralize chemical weapons, safeguard fissile materials, productively engage thousands of former weapons scientists in civilian research, and mitigate biological threats. We believe there is much left for us to accomplish in cooperation with Russia and third countries. We hope to extend the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program with Russia as a broader basis for our cooperation on securing WMD and related issues globally. The United States is committed to continuing our longstanding and successful cooperation and identifying a broader basis for partnership on securing WMD and related issues globally. From its initial focus twenty years ago on Russia and the newly independent states, the Nunn-Lugar program has withstood the test of time and is expanding its reach to other parts of the world.

Developing partnerships between regions and international organizations is also key to moving ahead. One such example of effective regional cooperation is the effort of some regional groups of States Signatories of the CTBT working together to increase the capacity of those states to effectively participate in establishing the Treaty’s verification regime. This is being achieved through joint regional exercises as well as workshops to share best practices. In some cases, regional groups are discussing ways to share resources through the creation of Regional Data Centers that receive and distribute Treaty-related verification data and products.

Years of experience in Europe and elsewhere have affirmed that disarmament initiatives at the global and regional levels are mutually reinforcing. As we all know, effective global norms and instruments are implemented at regional, sub-regional and national levels. At the same time, efforts at the sub-regional and regional levels can build momentum towards disarmament initiatives at the global level. These relationships and interconnections shape our collective work and activities. But we also know from history that strong partnership between us takes sustained effort.