Mr. Chairman,

I would like to emphasize that the United States remains encouraged by the progress made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in working toward a world free of chemical weapons. Since entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) 15 years ago, the OPCW has accomplished a great deal. This is a notable milestone for the OPCW since it remains an indispensable multilateral body with a global responsibility. With a near universal membership of 188 member states, 75% of all declared chemical weapon stockpiles verifiably destroyed, and over 4,700 inspections conducted at military and industry sites since entry into force, we are certainly pleased with what the OPCW has accomplished. This progress is due to the combined efforts and commitment of member states, along with the OPCW’s Technical Secretariat which is led by its distinguished Director General, Ahmet Uzumcu.

For our part, the United States has safely destroyed approximately 90 percent of its chemical weapons stockpile under OPCW verification, before the April 2012 deadline. The United States continues its steadfast commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and will continue working in a transparent manner towards the complete destruction of our remaining small amount of chemical weapons.

The United States also remains fully committed to the non-proliferation of chemical weapons and for working to ensure that there will be no re-emergence of chemical weapons. Such a goal will take commitment from all States Parties and a continued effort in a number of areas to include Universality. We recognize that preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons requires a strong inspectorate, a credible industrial verification regime, and enactment by all States Parties of the necessary domestic legal regimes to fully enforce the CWC. These are all areas of
vital importance for the success and longevity of the CWC and the Organization responsible for its implementation.

The Third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention next April provides a good opportunity to reinforce these concerns and to work with international partners to ensure that the CWC remains an important instrument for ensuring global peace and security.

Mr. Chairman, while we remain proud of the accomplishments and cooperation from States Parties and the OPCW, we recognize that there remain real challenges and sobering realities, such as the acknowledged possession of chemical weapons by Syria and its stated willingness to use them in response to “external aggression.” President Obama has made it clear that the use of chemical weapons in Syria would have enormous consequences. The UN Secretary-General and the OPCW Director General also have emphasized that the use of chemical weapons would be reprehensible. Other world leaders have stressed this same point.

Mr. Chairman, the world is now faced with a situation where the possibility of the use of chemical weapons is very real. These chemical weapons pose a grave threat to peace and international security, and further underscore the vital importance and role that the OPCW and States Parties can play in working to ensure the elimination of such weapons and strengthening international security. The United States applauds the on-going cooperation between the UN and the OPCW and encourages continuation of such efforts.

We continue to call on the Syrian government to eliminate its chemical weapons arsenal and join the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we will continue to work with the international community toward that end. In the preamble of the Chemical Weapons Convention, all States Parties “determined for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons through the implementation of the provisions of this Convention.” We must stand together to make this goal a reality.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Seventh BWC Review Conference was indeed an opportunity for greater imagination and greater collective effort in confronting the threat of biological weapons and an opportunity to continue the important work of adapting our international efforts to a changing world and a changing threat. That Conference, conducted under the
distinguished Presidency of Amb. van den IJssel, was challenging. Not everyone was ready to seize the opportunity to do something new. And among those who were ready, not everyone agreed on what that something new should be. But it is in the nature of things that multilateral discussions on important issues are complex; that there are competing views; that dialogue and understanding are important; and that change may only occur through gradual processes.

So while the Review Conference did not achieve everything my government certainly hoped it would, we are satisfied with the outcome, and believe the stage is set for enhancing the important work of this forum.

For the first time ever, a U.S. Secretary of State led the U.S. delegation to the BWC Review Conference. When Secretary Clinton addressed that gathering, she spoke about how the biological weapons threat is evolving and the importance for the world community to adapt its outlook in the face of new challenges. She also highlighted the value of transparency and efforts to build mutual trust among Parties to the convention; we may not always agree on how to do it, but we all agree that it is important to have confidence that our treaty partners are living up to their obligations. As part of this initiative, the U.S. hosted a number of Ambassadors for a tour of our national bio-defense campus in July. We also hosted a large number of countries, organizations and other stakeholders at an international conference on health and security in September which highlighted the value of collaboration and preparedness.

Secretary Clinton, at the Review Conference, also called for renewed work in three broad areas:

- Strengthening national implementation measures to combat proliferation and the threat of bioterrorism;
- Understanding and addressing the implications of developments in science and technology, including taking steps to guard against the misuse of scientific knowledge; and
- Building international cooperation and assistance, particularly in detecting and responding to outbreaks of infectious disease.

The Review Conference adopted a five-year workplan whose structure reflects these key areas. These are broader topics than we have addressed in the past – intentionally so. And for the first time, the new program will allow us to address each of these topics every year. That means that over the next five-year cycle we will come back to the same issues systematically in order to make real progress and generate momentum for the Eighth Review Conference in 2016. This
approach also will enhance our ability to have coherent and predictable interaction with other organizations and international actors who are stakeholders in the interconnected health security field.

But the real challenge is before us now. The RevCon set the stage, but it is up to us -- the BWC States Parties -- to take meaningful action. In July, BWC States Parties held the first expert-level consultations of the new process under the very able and distinguished chairmanship of Ambassador Delmi of Algeria. Overall, my delegation was impressed with the seriousness with which delegations engaged the issues. Some important proposals were put forward by a number of delegations – mine included – for consideration at the BWC Annual Meeting this December. I hope all member states will join together in making the most of this opportunity to strengthen international security and advance global health.

All 165 BWC States Parties should work together as well to support universalization of this important treaty. In that regard, as one of the depositaries of the BWC, I am particularly pleased to congratulate Ambassador Kabua of the Marshall Islands. The legislature, the Nitijela, has approved the accession of the Marshall Islands to the BWC. Once the instruments of ratification have been duly deposited, the Marshall Islands will become the 166th member state of this important treaty. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.