Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the interest of time, I have shortened my spoken remarks, but the full U.S. statement will be made available on the website of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations and the Secretariat’s QuickFirst portal, as well as circulated to delegations.

Last year at the Sixty-Seventh meeting of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee, the so-called “Sandy Rules,” very sensibly promulgated by then-Chairman Percaya of Indonesia, caused our delegation to submit our comments on Disarmament Machinery for the record. This year, we are pleased to speak to some of these issues. We would like to share the U.S. perspective on Disarmament Machinery, as well as to address the process of “Change Management” in the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

At the First Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament (SSOD I) in 1978, the international community recorded decisions on Disarmament Machinery which, in our view, are still relevant and valid today. We should not blame the wise visions of our predecessors and the machinery they created for the present-day persistent deadlock in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. Nor should we blame them for the fact that consensus recommendations and conclusions continue to elude us at the United Nations Disarmament Commission. This regrettable state of affairs is not the fault of the machinery itself. It is true that modest adjustments to the machinery and established practice over time might be helpful. In fact, some interesting ideas have been put forward over the past few years. One of them – the Informal Working Group (IWG) established this past summer in the Conference on Disarmament to assist in developing a program of work – we hope will succeed. Still others, such as longer rotations for the CD Presidency, might also facilitate our work.
However, I think we all know that these ideas alone do not offer a panacea. What is needed is a willingness among all States to use this machinery as it was initially intended, and to recognize that the special features of this machinery are designed to allow States to protect their national interests. Circumventing existing machinery in ways that do not provide such a failsafe, or establishing instead some new conference – such as a Fourth Special Session of the United Nations Devoted to Disarmament or an International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament – do not offer a fruitful way forward. Rather, we believe these ideas could actually contribute to slowing down progress. The bottom line is that these alternatives are not likely to offer remedies to the challenges confronting us.

Mr. Chairman,

We should not focus only on our disappointments. There are many success stories involving Disarmament Machinery also. The success of the UNGA in negotiating and concluding the Arms Trade Treaty shows that progress can be made when the political will is there. On October 17, we heard from a panel of representatives from Disarmament/Non-proliferation Organizations, all of whom shared success stories, from the Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons – recently singled out for the Nobel Peace Prize – to the International Atomic Energy Agency, also a recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize for its work to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

While much smaller and more modest, another part of the disarmament machinery, first proposed by France in SSOD I, has also prospered – the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). Established in 1980 by the UNGA as an autonomous research institute, UNIDIR’s Board of Trustees is the UN Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament which was established by SSOD I. The United States values UNIDIR’s impartial, action-oriented research, and has worked closely on several important projects with UNIDIR, including its annual space security conference and a recent conference on “The Role of Confidence Building Measures in Assuring Cyber Stability.”

Mr. Chairman,

The United States would like to thank Mr. Kim Won-soo for again coming before the UNGA First Committee to brief on the efforts aimed at change management. We would like to offer some comments on his presentation and the Change Management Plan contained in document A/68/485 issued late last month. We
offered these comments at Mr. Kim's briefing in Geneva October 16th, and would like to share them with our New York colleagues today.

The United States views this as an important initiative that can promote our overarching goals of greater efficiency, streamlined operations, reduced costs, and improved transparency within the UN system. It is incumbent upon us, of course, as Member States, to work with the UN to ensure that the objectives are in the overall plan. These efforts are key to maintaining the credibility of the organization and in garnering strong support among publics and parliaments, including the U.S. Congress, for continued full funding for participation in international organizations at a time when there are many competing demands for limited resources. The United States is reviewing these proposals with this in mind.

The United States also welcomes the opportunity to review the change management proposal related to knowledge, research and training institutes. We especially value the idea of integrating the library services and "institutional memory" of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the UN Office at Geneva Library into a single function.

We do have questions about parts of the report that have not been fully outlined to date. For example, the proposal references the 2005 Summit outcome, which called for a more efficient and effective use of financial and human resources, and calls for closer coordination between training and research functions of the organization. We would like to better understand how the proposal achieves this goal, as it seems to separate research and training into separate functions.

We are very interested to learn more about how this proposal will realistically generate meaningful long-term cost savings. It argues that some of the savings would be realized as opportunities for shared administrative support in all of the functional areas are identified. The proposal specifically cites administrative support as a possible area. However, some of these entities, such as UNIDIR, already benefit from shared administrative services through the UN Office in Geneva.

We are also interested to hear more about the establishment of the research coordination network and support hub. What is its composition, precise functions, level of staffing, and annual cost?
We are pleased that the proposal does not appear to invent new permanent positions beyond the new ASG mandate, which needs further clarification, to support the research coordination network. But we would want to make sure that the envisioned support hub adds value to the existing work and products of the research institutes and enhances partnerships, rather than establishes a new mandate without clear direction as this would contradict the argument for consolidation and streamlining.

Consistent with the previous point, we note the multiple references throughout the document on maintaining existing governance mechanisms of the research institutes, and therefore we want to better understand the role of the new ASG position as it relates to his/her responsibility for the coordination network. UNIDIR, for example, has an autonomous role, carrying out independent research, within the UN structures, and it reports to a Board appointed by the UN Secretary-General. A clear statement as to the role and responsibilities of this new ASG function, and UNIDIR’s continued autonomy, would help alleviate concerns about these entities’ independence.

Finally, we note the reference that some institutions are experiencing financial difficulties owing to the current global financial climate. We do see great value in the possibility of promoting sustainable funding through a strategic plan, and we would like to better understand how a common strategic fundraising document could be formulated, as the relevant research institutions often obtain their funding from many different sources with differing expertise and interests.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, we appreciate the consultations that the change management team has already engaged in with relevant stakeholders, and we hope that, as we go forward, we will obtain further clarification about the details of this proposal. The United States continues to be supportive of ideas and proposals which can demonstrate actual efficiency gains while ensuring that the work products of these various technical entities, and their abilities to continue such work, are not comprised.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.