Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations, Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, on your election as Chair of the First Committee during its 69th session. The United States pledges to support your leadership and the work of this committee. We are sure that together we can make this a session that puts us on the right path for the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference (RevCon).

As we begin our work, it is important to remember why we are here. We are, as I have said many times, travelling on a long and difficult road. We are facing obstacles – today more clearly than in years past – that slow the pace of progress. We press ahead, because we know that only by continuing our committed, serious work on reducing the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction can we achieve safety and security for generations to come.

That is what motivates and guides U.S. policy. That is the sentiment behind President Obama’s 2009 speech in Prague. That is what we sincerely hope guides the path of every nation represented here. While we have accomplished much over the past five years, we have no intention of diverting from our efforts to reduce the role and numbers of nuclear weapons, increase confidence and transparency, strengthen nonproliferation, and address compliance challenges.

Mr. Chairman, on this last point, let me stress that compliance is an essential element of international peace and security. That is why the United States is once again sponsoring its triennial resolution on “Compliance with nonproliferation, arms limitation and disarmament agreements and commitments.” Our compliance resolution seeks to reflect and strengthen the global consensus on this important topic. We welcome maximum co-sponsorship and support, and hope that it will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Chairman, we should view the challenges that face us today as a potent reminder that our work is more important than ever. First and foremost, we must
all provide unyielding support for the cornerstone of the nonproliferation regime, the NPT.

Achieving a successful RevCon in 2015 is a priority for the United States. We encourage all parties to join with the United States to advance realistic and achievable objectives. The NPT binds nations to a common interest in preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear weapons use. The challenges to the NPT are real, but the treaty is far too important to fail or be held hostage to impractical demands or political agendas that will not command consensus.

Some question U.S. support for nuclear disarmament. This is a mistake. We remain firmly committed to Article VI of the NPT and to achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. The United States has made clear our readiness to discuss further nuclear reductions with the Russian Federation, but progress requires a willing partner and good environment.

The United States will continue to make it clear that arms control regimes and their corresponding nuclear reductions have served the world well for more than 40 years. The United States and Russia, of course, have special responsibilities to protect and preserve those regimes, as our countries still possess over 90% of the global nuclear stockpile.

A critical part of this regime is the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). The United States is deeply concerned about Russia’s violation of its obligations under this landmark treaty. We believe that the INF Treaty benefits the security of the United States, our allies, and Russia. For that reason, we urge Russia to resolve our concerns, return to compliance, and ensure the continued viability of the Treaty.

Now is the time to move forward, not back to postures reminiscent of the Cold War. Despite these challenges, the United States and Russia continue to implement the New START Treaty successfully. When we complete implementation, deployed nuclear weapons will be at their lowest levels since the 1950s. This translates to an 85% reduction to the U.S. nuclear weapon stockpile from its Cold War peak. That is indisputable progress in disarmament.

As we consider future reductions, our focus must be on responsible measures that can be trusted and verified. We will learn from our past experience – successes and disappointments – and continue to move ahead with each step building on the last. Actually, perhaps we do ourselves a disservice when we think about disarmament
as a metaphorical ladder – one that must be climbed in a linear fashion. Perhaps we are better off thinking in terms of how creeks and streams connect to form rivers. Over time, those mighty rivers are irreversible; they cut through massive and seemingly impenetrable stone on the way to their final destination. In those terms, one can see how the myriad of tasks in front of us will connect to each other and steadily but surely form an irreversible path towards disarmament.

There is no way to skip to the end and forgo the hard work of preparing for the technical and political disarmament challenges that lie ahead. For example, we can all acknowledge that verification will become increasingly complex at lower numbers of nuclear weapons, while requirements for effectiveness will increase. All of us – every nation here – should be devoting ample time and energy to address this challenge right now. As a start, I recommend reviewing the Nuclear Threat Initiative’s recent research on future verification mechanisms, and encourage everyone to attend our October 14 side event on the topic.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is continuing its engagement with the P5 on the issue of disarmament. Collectively, we have created a consensus NPT Reporting Framework, first demonstrated at this year’s NPT PrepCom, and we continue to work on a P5 Glossary that will increase mutual understanding. Ongoing P5 work on critical Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) inspection techniques will help enhance that Treaty’s verification regime.

The United States is pleased that the United Kingdom will host the sixth annual P5 conference early next year. I want to stress that speed is less important than results in this process. The regular interactions and cooperation that are happening now is the foundation on which future P5 multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament will stand.

Patience and persistence is needed from all parties both among and beyond the P5. That is why the United States is interested in engaging non-nuclear weapon states in order to increase transparency and engagement in the disarmament process. Such collaboration can help us ensure the nearly 70-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons continues forever.

As we consider the agenda for the 2015 RevCon, it is important to focus on all three pillars of the NPT. The United States will seek a balanced review that addresses each.
Ensuring NPT safeguards are upheld and nuclear energy remains in peaceful use are no less important to disarmament as future nuclear reductions. Treaty violations should never be tolerated and demand our attention. That is because NPT pillars are mutually reinforcing and implementation of each is a shared responsibility.

Mr. Chairman, as we approach the 2015 RevCon, the United States will be focusing its efforts on a number of other issues. We will be supporting legally binding assurances against use or threat of use of nuclear weapons in the context of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty Protocols. We were pleased to sign the Protocol to the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in May. We will continue to work with ASEAN toward signature of the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty Protocol. Bringing into force the protocols of all five regional zones is a top priority.

Along with our P5+1 partners, the United States will continue to seek concrete, verifiable steps to ensure that Iran’s nuclear program is exclusively peaceful.

The United States is eager to launch negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) – an agreement recognized to be a vital and necessary step in multilateral nuclear disarmament. Nations that continue to block these negotiations should consider how their actions increase nuclear dangers and impede nuclear disarmament.

This year, through a resolution from this body, and under Canada’s leadership, a UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on FMCT was convened. It is our hope that the GGE and its final report will finally break this impasse and allow us to proceed with the negotiation of this important treaty.

The United States will continue to create the conditions that will help us ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Energy Ernie Moniz have both recently emphasized the need for this Treaty to finally enter into force.

While we are focused on CTBT ratification in the United States, we call on the seven other Annex 2 States to complete their ratification processes without delay. The time for action is now. The United States asks that all CTBT Signatories continue their commitment to support an effective, operational, and sustainable verification system for the Treaty. We also look forward to participating in the upcoming CTBT Integrated Field Exercise in Jordan.
Mr. Chairman, the United States is also focusing on the long-term sustainability of space. We believe irresponsible behavior in space, such as the testing or use of debris-generating ASAT systems, threatens the security, safety, economic well-being, and space science activities of all nations. We are pleased that the report from the UN GGE on Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures for outer space activities was endorsed by consensus by the United Nations General Assembly. It provides a valuable roadmap for practical, near-term solutions, such as an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities.

On the subject of conventional arms control and disarmament, the United States recently announced that we will not use anti-personnel landmines (APL) outside the Korean Peninsula, nor will we assist, encourage, or induce anyone outside the Korean Peninsula to engage in activity prohibited by the Ottawa Convention. We will also undertake to destroy APL stockpiles not required for the defense of the Republic of Korea. The United States will continue our diligent efforts to pursue solutions that would be compliant with and ultimately allow us to join the Ottawa Convention. At the same time, we are proud to be the world’s single largest financial supporter of humanitarian mine action.

We are also pleased that the Arms Trade Treaty will enter-into-force before the end of this year. As a signatory, we are working with Mexico and other interested States in pursuit of a successful first Conference of States Parties that will lay the groundwork for a Treaty that lives up to all of our expectations.

I would like to thank all those here who aided in the effort to remove chemical weapons from Syria. Through an unprecedented collaboration of nations and international organizations, we collected, removed, and ultimately destroyed 1,300 tons of chemical weapons and precursors from Syria. Very serious issues with Syria still must be resolved, including the reports of systematic use of chlorine gas in opposition areas. The fact remains that through cooperation, the international community was able to significantly reduce the threat posed by chemical weapons in the region. The framework we developed can serve as a guide for future WMD nonproliferation cooperation.

In sum, it is not enough to have the will to pursue nonproliferation and disarmament; we have to have a way to pursue nonproliferation and disarmament. We will require all the tools we have available: diplomacy, law, science, technology, economic cooperation, and more. We will have to eschew needless arguments, vanity, and political games. We will need the courage and the tenacity
to keep chipping away at this problem, day after day, month after month, year after year.

It will not be easy. Just as there is no single solution to our global fight against violent extremism, no single initiative, no matter how noble or well-intentioned, can end the threat from weapons of mass destruction by itself. In both cases, we must commit ourselves to active and engaged cooperation, and, most importantly, we must seek the cooperation and support of people outside of these walls, and outside of our capitals. The global public must both understand the significant humanitarian impacts of weapons of mass destruction and the achievable way we can reduce and then eliminate them.

We are under no illusions – we know there is disagreement on the right path ahead. Instead of focusing on what divides us, I would again ask everyone to remember why we are here and what we are charged with doing. We can and must reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction. By focusing on our mutual commitments to the NPT and other established international agreements, we can succeed.

Mr. Chairman, we must succeed and the United States is ready to do its part.

Thank you.