Statement by Ambassador Robert A. Wood  
Delegation of the United States of America  

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Thematic Discussion on Nuclear Weapons  
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On April 5, 2009, in Prague, President Obama stated the U.S. commitment “to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” and to take concrete steps to that end. He committed to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the U.S. national security strategy. Since then, the United States concluded a Nuclear Posture Review in 2010 and the United States and Russia have concluded and brought into force the New START Treaty. In Berlin in June 2013, President Obama announced that the United States was ready to seek further negotiated cuts with Russia to reduce our deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one third below the levels of the New START Treaty and to work with our NATO Allies to seek bold reductions in U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear weapons.

History shows that a practical and full-spectrum approach to disarmament has proven to be the most effective means to reduce nuclear dangers and make progress on nuclear disarmament. The United States will continue to pursue every avenue available, but the hard truth is that the final goal of disarmament will not be realized overnight or in a single negotiation. We know there are some who have called for alternate, immediate, wholesale approaches to nuclear disarmament. But an outright ban now on nuclear weapons will not get rid of nuclear weapons overnight. Achieving a world without nuclear weapons will require both strengthening the global nuclear nonproliferation regime and working toward nuclear disarmament.

We understand the deep concern about the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, a concern which underpins our own nuclear disarmament efforts. Our pragmatic, sustained approach to nuclear disarmament has borne fruit, resulting in major reductions in the role and number of nuclear weapons, and in fissile material stocks and infrastructure. The United States and the Russian Federation continue to successfully implement the New START Treaty, the most comprehensive nuclear arms control agreement in more than 20 years. U.S. and Russian deployed nuclear weapons have already reached their lowest levels since the 1950s. As we reported to the NPT Review Conference last May, the U.S.
The stockpile has been reduced by 85 percent from its highpoint in 1967 during the Cold War.

We remain ready to negotiate further reductions with Russia of all nuclear weapons; including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons. That will require a willing partner and conditions conducive to progress. And as we consider arms control priorities, we will continue to consult closely with our allies and partners every step of the way. Their security is non-negotiable.

The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) was an important step. It reduced further the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy, and made clear that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations. The NPR emphasized the firm U.S. commitment to maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear stockpile as long as nuclear weapons exist. This includes making needed investments to modernize what remains of the aging and unsustainable Cold War-era nuclear infrastructure. The production complex that used to produce plutonium and highly enriched uranium (HEU) for weapons is now permanently shut down, devoted solely to managing the legacy of past production.

It is important to underscore that the United States is neither developing new nuclear weapons, nor are we pursuing any new nuclear missions. Our Stockpile Stewardship and management activities are intended only to sustain existing designs, modernize their safety, security and use control features, and modernize facilities. A modern complex will actually reduce the need to maintain retired warheads as a hedge against problems with deployed warheads. In addition to Stockpile Stewardship and management activities, investments in more modern facilities also benefit a range of activities in nuclear disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear security, and emergency response.

Mr. Chairman, the United States is also working actively to reduce its holdings of fissile material stocks that have been removed permanently from nuclear weapons programs. We have down-blended more than 146 metric tons of U.S. HEU – enough material for more than 5,800 nuclear weapons. More than 50 metric tons of this material was down-blended under IAEA monitoring. Another success story is the recently completed 1993 U.S.-Russia HEU Purchase Agreement, under which 500 metric tons of Russian weapons-origin HEU, enough for approximately
20,000 warheads, was down-blended to LEU and used for peaceful purposes as fuel in U.S. nuclear power reactors.

Mr. Chairman, we also continue to work to build support for ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), making the case to our citizens and legislators that the Treaty will serve to enhance our collective security. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, we have not seen progress across the board in recent years. The United States continues to be dismayed by the deadlock that has prevented the Conference on Disarmament from negotiating a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) — long on the disarmament agenda and long overdue. A treaty dealing with the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is an essential step for global nuclear disarmament and the next logical multilateral step to cap nuclear arsenals world-wide. We welcome the results of the FMCT Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), in which the United States participated, and the substantive discussion that ensued. We hope that a detailed examination of the GGE’s Final Report will advance the prospects for FMCT negotiations.

The United States continues to implement the Action Plan from the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which remains a consensus-based, long-term roadmap for strengthening all three pillars of the NPT. And the United States remains committed to continuing our work to carry forward recommendations outlined in the sections of the proposed final document from the 2015 Review Conference covering the Treaty’s core pillars. We will continue to work with others to strengthen International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, and to resolve noncompliance with nonproliferation obligations and UN Security Council resolutions. Unresolved noncompliance presents a fundamental challenge to all NPT parties and puts at risk the many security benefits that derive from the NPT.

Mr. Chairman, we know that much remains on our agenda, but every day the path to a world without nuclear weapons shortens. We have made real progress, and we know what we need to do to move further down that path. The United States is committed to fulfilling our obligations and working with the international community to take the next steps. Of course, all Member States have a role to play in disarmament, and we look forward to working with you to achieve that ultimate goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.