Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States remains a leader in efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and remains committed to an effective and modernized arms control architecture. The security environment today is worsening, in large part due to the behavior of countries such as Russia and China. Arms control is a tool that can help reverse this trend, but it is not an end to itself. The United States has called for a new era of arms control.

Russia’s material breach of the INF Treaty was a major negative development. Russia bears sole responsibility for the INF Treaty’s termination, which highlights compliance as a critical factor for nuclear disarmament, as called for in NPT Article VI.

Russia and China would prefer a world where the United States exercises self-restraint while they do as they wish. Russia is dangling the notion of an INF-range missile deployment moratorium. But they have already fielded multiple battalions of 9M729 ground-launched cruise missiles throughout Russia, including in western Russia within range of dozens of European capitals. Similarly, China threatens to target U.S. allies that host any U.S. missiles, even though China has already deployed thousands of intermediate-range missiles with the purpose of holding the United States and our allies and partners under threat. Today, there are zero U.S. ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in the field.

Despite these discouraging developments, the United States remains committed to improving prospects for further progress towards nuclear disarmament. Earlier this year, the United States launched the “Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament” (CEND) initiative. The CEND Working Group Kick-off Plenary meeting included nonproliferation and disarmament experts from 42 geographically and politically diverse countries, including the P5 and three non-States Party to the NPT. This meeting demonstrated that an open, constructive dialogue is incredibly valuable in developing sustainable progress on disarmament.
The United States and Russia continue to implement the New START Treaty. Both countries met the Treaty's central limits by February 2018 as required under the Treaty. Much has changed in the international security environment since the Treaty was signed. Despite this, Russia continues to expand its non-strategic nuclear forces, and develop new strategic-range, nuclear-armed systems. Meanwhile, China continues to build-up its nuclear capabilities. Indeed, China looks set to double the size of its nuclear stockpile over the next decade – yet refuses to engage in a meaningful arms control discussion with the United States.

So where might all this Russian and Chinese arms racing lead, Mr. Chairman? Let’s look at the big picture. The more assertive China and Russia become, the more they seek an unconstrained strengthening of their nuclear arsenals, especially on new destabilizing weapons, the more they will seek to coerce free nations in their regions. The First Committee provides a key venue for like-minded nations to persuade Russia and China to change course – to cease their aggressive policies that undermine the rules-based international order and make it dangerous for responsible democratic states to lower their defenses.

Regarding North Korea, our goal remains the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. It is important for all UN Member States to continue to fully implement and enforce existing sanctions as mandated by UN Security Council Resolutions.

Methodical approaches, like CEND, consider the international security environment and examine effective measures toward disarmament, including the need for verification provisions that confirm compliance. In contrast, the TPNW will not move us any closer to eliminating nuclear weapons and has increased political divisions that make future disarmament efforts more difficult.

With a clear-eyed approach, we will continue to work with all those willing to work with us to solve the many challenges we all face.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.