Regional Issues Debate

remarks by

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Preparatory Committee for the Treaty
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Today’s discussion presents an opportunity to review and assess regional developments as they relate to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, (NPT). Our remarks will focus on the response to cases of noncompliance – the primary challenge facing the Treaty. To enhance our mutual security, the international community must work together to tackle the dangers of nuclear proliferation, which are never exclusively regional in character. Over recent years, NPT States Parties have faced significant challenges, particularly from states that have cheated on their obligations and thus defied the international community.

North Korea’s nuclear weapons program poses a threat to regional and global security, and an urgent challenge to the global nonproliferation regime. Even prior to its notice of withdrawal from the Treaty, North Korea repeatedly violated international nonproliferation obligations and norms. The world witnessed the culmination of this illicit activity on October 9, 2006, when North Korea conducted a nuclear explosive detonation. The U.S. and the international community expect North Korea to comply with United Nations Security Council Resolution with (UNSCR) 1718, and fulfill its commitments under the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement and the February 13, 2007 Initial Actions Agreement.

Meanwhile, Iran is moving demonstrably in the wrong direction, remains uncooperative with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and is growing ever more defiant with the international community, as Tehran continues to disregard Security Council Resolutions demanding that Iran suspend its enrichment and reprocessing programs and at long last cooperate fully with the IAEA.

In addition to their obvious implications for global and regional security, blatant treaty violations hurt the nonproliferation regime by hindering efforts to achieve universal adherence to the NPT. In order to achieve universal adherence, the NPT must provide a viable, and meaningful security framework that ensures compliance. Noncompliance has undermined such a security framework. Nonetheless, while recognizing that adhering to the NPT is a sovereign decision, the United States continues to hold the view that States Parties should reinvigorate the goal of universal NPT adherence.

The United States welcomes and encourages all non-parties to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon states as soon as possible, and we continue to support the goal of strengthening the nonproliferation regime. We do so by seeking to establish an environment of mutual respect and trust, by encouraging the three parties which have not joined the NPT to exercise nuclear restraint, and by insisting that all NPT Parties comply with their obligations. We believe that a
rigorous approach to compliance will help strengthen the regime, and ultimately promote NPT universality by demonstrating that the Treaty provides meaningful and enduring security benefits to all adhering states.

MIDDLE EAST

In that regard, Mr. Chairman, achieving a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East remains a key U.S. foreign policy goal. We remain committed to a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and continue efforts to realize President Bush’s vision of two states -- Israel and Palestine -- living side by side in peace and security.

Within the context of a stable, comprehensive regional peace, the United States supports the objective of a verifiable Middle East verifiably free of weapons of mass destruction. Progress toward this goal requires progress toward a political and security environment in the Middle East that is conducive to creating this condition. The U.S. will continue to press on these fronts.

In September 2000, the 44th General Conference of the IAEA asked the Director General to “make arrangements to convene a forum in which participants from the Middle East and other interested parties could learn from the experience of other regions, including the area of confidence-building relevant to the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone.” The United States continues to support regional aspirations to hold this forum, and hopes that interested parties will once again engage each other and try to find a way forward so as not to miss this rare opportunity for dialogue.

Mr. Chairman, there is little hope of reaching an agreement to create a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction unless the nations of that region implement and uphold all existing agreements to which they are parties. We cannot hope to attract new parties to the treaty if the nonproliferation assurances offered by the Treaty are not seen to be credible. Countries must be held accountable to their commitments. Specifically, in over a dozen reports beginning in 2003, the IAEA confirmed that Iran pursued undeclared nuclear activities involving the most sensitive fuel cycle technologies for nearly two decades. Working covertly, Iran has aimed to develop uranium enrichment, plutonium separation, and other technologies conducive to its pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability.

In June 2006, the P5+1 first made a generous offer to convince Tehran to suspend its uranium enrichment and reprocessing and come to the negotiating table. The P5+1 package would offer Iran international assistance in light water power reactor construction and an assured fuel supply, both of which would advance the interests of the Iranian people if the objective of the Government of Iran were indeed the establishment of a robust civilian nuclear energy program. Iran would also receive help in many other fields, including civil aviation, medicine and agriculture. Iran has so far refused, however, ignored the deadlines for compliance set forth in Security Council Resolutions 1696, 1737 and 1747 and rejecting what is in fact the most promising opportunity available to it for the development of a legitimate peaceful nuclear power generation program.

Iran's failure to address the myriad outstanding issues that surround its nuclear program only compounds the international community's strong concerns about what so many countries worry publicly--and even more agree privately--is clearly an Iranian nuclear weapons effort. This record underscores the inconsistency between Iran's actions and its professed interests in a civilian nuclear energy program. We hope Iran decides as soon as possible to suspend its
proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities, sits down to negotiate with the P5+1 nations, and takes full advantage of the generous P5+1 incentives package which remains on the table.

NORTHEAST ASIA

Mr. Chairman, North Korea’s nuclear weapons program presents another threat to regional and global security and an urgent challenge to the global nonproliferation regime.

North Korea’s noncompliance with its NPT obligations surfaced more than a decade ago. Indeed, North Korea has never fully met its obligations under the NPT and related IAEA safeguards in the first place, despite the assistance efforts made by many countries and by the IAEA. In 2002, the United States confronted North Korea with evidence that it was pursuing a clandestine uranium enrichment program, in addition to a plutonium-based weapons program.

North Korea’s denials have been contradicted by A.Q. Khan’s account of the uranium enrichment assistance his network rendered to North Korea, as well as by other reports. North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT on January 11, 2003, and on February 12, 2003, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution in which it decided to report North Korea to the Security Council. North Korea declared in February 2005 that it had manufactured nuclear weapons, and it set off a nuclear detonation on October 9, 2006, despite repeated warnings from the international community, including a Presidential Statement from the Security Council.

International condemnation of this grave provocation was quick and widespread. On October 14, 2006, the Security Council unanimously adopted its Resolution 1718. This resolution decided that North Korea should abandon its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, and all other existing weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs, in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. The resolution requires UN Member States to prevent transfers to North Korea of a broad range of items, including listed materials, equipment, goods, and technology that could contribute to North Korea’s WMD or ballistic missile programs, as well as certain conventional arms. It requires North Korea to cease export of all such items. It also calls on States to cooperate in inspecting cargo going to or from North Korea, in accordance with their national authorities and consistent with international law. Resolution 1718 further requires Member States to freeze the financial assets of persons and entities designated by the Security Council as being engaged in or supporting North Korea’s nuclear-related, other WMD-related, and ballistic missile-related programs, or those acting on their behalf.

North Korea’s nuclear programs and nuclear detonation have deepened its isolation. The United States has made clear repeatedly, including at the highest levels of our government, that we seek a peaceful, diplomatic end to North Korea’s nuclear program. This multilateral problem requires a multilateral solution, and after a hiatus of nearly one year, the Six-Party Talks—bringing together China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, North Korea, and the United States—resumed in December 2006.

On February 13 of this year, the Six Parties reached an Initial Actions Agreement to take steps toward the implementation of the commitments made in the 2005 Joint Statement, in which North Korea committed to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, and to return to the NPT and IAEA safeguards. In the February 13 agreement, North Korea agreed, within sixty days, to shut down and seal, with the objective of eventual abandonment, the Yongbyon nuclear facility, including the reprocessing facility and the 5MW reactor, and to invite back IAEA personnel to conduct monitoring and verification activities, as agreed between the
IAEA and North Korea. All of these actions would be a clear benefit to NPT parties, the nonproliferation regime, and regional and international security.

On March 13 and 14 of this year, North Korea invited IAEA Director General ElBaradei to visit Pyongyang for discussions relating to the monitoring and verification of the shutdown and sealing of the nuclear facilities at its Yongbyon complex. On April 13, 2007, one day before the end of the 60 days, North Korea released a statement reaffirming that it "remains unchanged in its will to implement the February 13th agreement." To date, however, North Korea has yet to take concrete action to shut down Yongbyon or to invite IAEA personnel to verify the facility's closure.

The United States continues to encourage North Korea to fulfill its commitments in the Initial Actions agreement, and to move forward in the next phase toward the abandonment of all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. North Korea needs to make the strategic decision to abandon its nuclear programs and to take concrete steps toward denuclearization. North Korea must understand that the problems it has created by violating its obligations can be resolved only through the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of its entire nuclear program, including plutonium reprocessing, uranium enrichment, and weapons programs.

SOUTH ASIA

Mr. Chairman, the situation in South Asia poses a further set of unique challenges. Let me reiterate that the United States continues to believe that all countries that are not NPT States Party should adhere to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon states. We recognize, however, that India and Pakistan may not join the Treaty for the foreseeable future. Until universal adherence is attained, we place a high priority on ensuring that states outside the NPT regime use nuclear technology responsibly.

We remain deeply concerned by the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in South Asia, and do not believe they enhance regional security. We welcome recent signs of improved relations between India and Pakistan. And we continue to urge both countries to exercise nuclear and missile restraint, to bring their respective export controls in line with international standards, and to discuss and implement confidence-building measures designed to reduce regional tensions and diminish risks that nuclear weapons could be used, either intentionally or accidentally, in a crisis.

We continue to seek Pakistan's active involvement in the full-range of international efforts to combat proliferation and strongly encourage Pakistan to more closely align its nonproliferation posture with international standards and practices. In this context, Pakistan's participation in the Export Control and Related Border Security Program, the Container Security Initiative, the Megaports Program, the Secure Freight Initiative and Global Threat Reduction Initiative, are important steps and very useful measures that increase its security and contribute to critical nonproliferation objectives. We believe Pakistan should also consider participating in such activities as the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. In addition, we continue to encourage Pakistan to cooperate with international efforts to investigate the A.Q. Khan network and ensure that proliferation from Pakistan does not occur again in the future.

With respect to India, implementing the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative is a key U.S. objective. In July 2005, India made several enhanced nonproliferation commitments including, inter alia: identifying, separating, and placing under IAEA safeguards and an Additional

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Protocol its civil nuclear facilities and programs; continuing its unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing and working toward a multilateral Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty; refraining from transferring enrichment and reprocessing technologies to states that do not already have them; and harmonizing its control lists with and adhering to the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Each of these activities will help to strengthen the global nonproliferation regime. Together, they constitute a dramatic change in moving India into closer conformity with international nonproliferation standards and practices. While many steps remain to fully implement this timely and important effort, this initiative simultaneously provides a process for developing civil nuclear cooperation to help meet India's growing energy requirements and strengthens the global nonproliferation regime. We look forward to working with the Indian Government and the international community to further strengthen nonproliferation efforts globally. India's endorsement of the Proliferation Security Initiative Statement of Principles, participation in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and harmonization of its control lists with those of the Australia Group and Wassenaar Arrangement would further advance global nonproliferation efforts.

In furthering our nonproliferation, energy security, and other strategic objectives in South Asia, we remain cognizant of our nonproliferation commitments and objectives when considering how to improve our bilateral relations with both Pakistan and India. Our actions with both States continue in every respect to be consistent with our NPT obligations, with our commitment to the Nuclear Suppliers Group Guidelines, and with our other shared international nonproliferation responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, unless the international community takes concerted steps to address the current crisis of nonproliferation compliance, we risk undermining the credibility of the NPT and of the global nonproliferation regime as a whole. Ensuring strict compliance with those core NPT obligations is a prerequisite for creating conditions that reinforce and advance regional stability and security, and in turn for improving conditions for genuine NPT universality.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.