Mr. Chairman,

The United States welcomes the opportunity to discuss real-world proliferation challenges that threaten our collective security.

Foremost among these is North Korea’s unlawful nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs, which pose a grave threat to international security and the global nonproliferation regime. Last September, the DPRK conducted its sixth and largest nuclear test, which it claimed was an “H-bomb for an ICBM.” The DPRK claimed the test “marked a very significant occasion in attaining the final goal of completing the state nuclear force.” Over the last two years, the DPRK has increased the frequency and range of its ballistic missile tests, including three ICBM tests and two missile launches over the territory of Japan.

We are encouraged by the recent summit meeting between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK, and the stated goal of complete denuclearization, but past diplomatic initiatives with the DPRK underscore the need for measured optimism and resolve. International efforts to pressure North Korea, counter its illicit networks, and constrain its destabilizing activities must and will continue. The global maximum pressure campaign must continue until the DPRK completely, verifiably, and irreversibly abandons its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear and delivery programs. This includes, at minimum, all countries fully implementing the spirit and letter of the UN DPRK sanctions regime. The international community stands united in its desire to see a denuclearized DPRK, and North Korea’s return to the NPT and IAEA safeguards.

Mr. Chairman,

Iran also poses a significant proliferation challenge. In October, President Trump announced the Administration’s Iran strategy, which underscores the United States’ commitment to denying
Iran all paths to a nuclear weapon and holding Iran accountable for its destabilizing non-nuclear activities, including its ballistic missile development and support for terrorism.

In January, the President approved the issuance of sanctions waivers in order for the Administration to work with our European partners to address deficiencies in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), including its verification provisions, the sunset of key nuclear commitments, and its failure to address long-range ballistic missiles. While we work to address these issues, we are committed to strict implementation of Iran’s JCPOA commitments and have continued to fulfill our own commitments. The President has made clear, however, that the United States will withdraw from the JCPOA if these issues are not addressed.

Given Iran’s history of noncompliance and illicit pursuit of nuclear weapons, thorough IAEA verification in Iran remains essential. Iran must strictly adhere to its IAEA safeguards obligations, including timely and proactive cooperation with the IAEA, and the international community must respond to any violations of its commitments. Any credible concerns of undeclared nuclear activities can and must be pursued by the IAEA, which must use all of its authorities to monitor Iran’s compliance.

Mr. Chairman,

Seven years have passed since the IAEA Board of Governors found Syria in noncompliance with its safeguards agreement for constructing an undeclared plutonium production reactor with North Korean assistance. Since that time, Syria has refused to cooperate with the IAEA’s investigation. Syria’s ongoing noncompliance is a direct challenge to the Treaty and should be a matter of concern for all Parties. We call on Syria to cooperate with the IAEA without delay.

Mr. Chairman,

The United States supports the long-term goal of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems, alongside a comprehensive and durable regional peace. We remain committed to supporting the regional states as they pursue practical steps and inclusive, consensus-based dialogue to advance this important goal. We regret the political and security realities that continue to impede progress, including the lack of trust in the region, rampant conflict and noncompliance, the ongoing use of chemical weapons by Syria, ballistic missile proliferation, and the non-recognition of Israel by some regional states.

We believe progress is possible, but only if pursued in a cooperative manner on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the regional states. The last two decades have illustrated that the NPT review process is not a productive venue for resolving regional divisions on this issue. Misguided attempts to coerce progress by holding the review process hostage will fail, as they
have in the past. Instead, we urge the regional states to engage their neighbors directly on practical measures to build trust and promote conditions conducive to a zone. We have provided U.S. views on potentially constructive avenues in this regard in a working paper.

We underline that the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East endorses the goal of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. It is difficult to imagine any genuine movement toward such a zone without resolute steps to address Syria’s clandestine chemical weapons program. Any serious supporter of such a zone should join us in resolving this problem immediately.

Mr. Chairman,

We remain concerned by the growth of nuclear stockpiles and capabilities in Asia by NPT and non-NPT Parties, and continue to encourage all states with nuclear weapons to exercise restraint regarding nuclear and missile capabilities. We welcome the steps that states have taken to bolster global nonproliferation efforts, including by harmonizing with, adhering to, and joining export control regimes and supporting efforts to prevent the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors.

We continue to encourage all states that have not yet done so to declare and maintain moratoria on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. The United States continues to support the long-term goal of NPT universality, and we remain committed to efforts to strengthen and uphold the Treaty.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.