

Statement by the by the United States

Main Committee I

The Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Statement by Ambassador Adam M. Scheinman

**New York
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States looks forward to supporting you and the work of this Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

For more than a half century, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has made irreplaceable contributions to international security. As we finally mark the 50th anniversary of the NPT's entry into force, we must not underestimate the importance of the task ahead of us. To quote the treaty's Preamble, "considering the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war," we need to make every effort to avert the risks of such a war.

In this Committee, we undertake our work amid a fraught security environment. Yet, we are here to work together, anchored by our good faith and a directive to pursue effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.

The United States has shown our commitment to this work through both word and deed. As is outlined in our National Report to the Review Conference, we have made steady progress towards disarmament – reducing the total U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, reducing the role of nuclear weapons in our national defense strategy, reducing our stocks of fissile material, and scaling back the associated infrastructure.

We know it is not enough. President Biden, a man who has spent more years thinking about nuclear threats and how to reduce them than anyone who has ever sat in the Oval Office, has said it is not enough. In his letter to this Conference, he

made clear that the United States will continue the long work toward eventual nuclear disarmament. It is a commitment based on our national security interests and on our deep-seated understanding of the humanitarian impacts of the use of nuclear weapons.

As Secretary Blinken said, “any country that asks others to reject the pursuit of nuclear weapons, also has to be willing to reduce – and eventually eliminate – their own stockpiles of nuclear weapons.” As such, we reaffirm our steadfast commitment to Article VI of the NPT and to creating a secure world without nuclear weapons.

As a demonstration of our transparency and commitment to Article VI of the NPT, last year, we once again released the total number of nuclear weapons in our stockpile. As of September 2020, the U.S. stockpile of nuclear weapons consisted of 3,750 warheads. That is an 88 percent reduction from its maximum of 31,255 in 1967. That is a 26% reduction since the 2010 Review Conference. Since the 2015 Review Conference, the United States has dismantled more than 800 nuclear warheads and has approximately 2,000 more retired and awaiting dismantlement.

Earlier this year the United States completed the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), in close consultation among interagency partners and with allies, partners and outside experts. Conducted within the context of the prevailing security environment, the 2022 NPR underlines the importance and mutually reinforcing nature of deterrence and arms control.

Further, a policy of restraint continues to shape the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. strategy. The United States believes that all NPT nuclear-weapon states have an obligation to act responsibly. We have chosen to act with restraint with respect to our peacetime nuclear activities, in the interest of avoiding actions that could unintentionally add to tensions or misinterpretation.

The United States does not use nuclear weapons to advance an expansionist security policy. We are not developing nuclear-armed hypersonic glide vehicles, nuclear-armed hypersonic cruise missiles, or ballistic or cruise missiles having a dual nuclear and conventional role. And we are not deploying nuclear-armed, land-based missiles outside of our national territory. Two other NPT nuclear-weapon states cannot make each of these claims.

As directed by the President, the United States will also examine steps to further reduce the risk of nuclear war and the global salience of nuclear weapons.

After the Biden-Harris Administration quickly engaged the Russian Federation to extend New START by a full five years, the United States pushed for the resumption of a U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue (SSD) aimed at reducing risk and laying the groundwork for future arms control. Unfortunately, President Putin has chosen war and violence over stability and diplomacy.

U.S. principles and objectives for the next steps in arms control with Russia have not changed, nor has the expiration date for New START – February 4, 2026. We seek to continue to advance those objectives, including by maintaining limits on all intercontinental-range nuclear weapons and developing new constraints on non-deployed nuclear weapons and theater-range, or nonstrategic, nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The United States stands ready to resume an open dialogue with Russia to progress to the next phase of reductions and shape the future of modern arms control, provided Russia is prepared to operate in good faith.

We also know that we must maintain and expand our channels of communication with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Given that we and the PRC share the same obligations under the NPT, Beijing’s resistance to engaging in substantive, bilateral nuclear risk reduction discussions is self-defeating. There is no benefit to be gained from excessive nuclear opacity – that only increases the chance of inadvertent conflict, miscommunication and the potential for destabilizing arms racing. Given its accelerating build-up of nuclear weapons, the PRC should engage in a now long-overdue discussion on risk reduction.

Mr. Chairman, the United States will also push forward our arms control and disarmament agenda in multilateral fora.

The United States supports the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and is committed to work to achieve its entry into force, recognizing the significant challenges that lie ahead in reaching this goal. For nearly 30 years, the United States has observed a zero-yield moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. We call on all states possessing nuclear weapons to declare and maintain such a moratorium.

We also continue to support the commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty – or FMCT – which would limit the dangers of a new nuclear arms race. The United States has maintained a moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive

devices, and we strongly encourage all states to follow suit pending negotiation of such a treaty. We have all waited too long for this next crucial step in multilateral arms control.

The United States continues to champion work to advance disarmament goals, like the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament initiative and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. We will also continue to partner with all those who seek to make substantive progress on these issues, like the Stockholm Initiative and the Nonproliferation and Disarmament Initiative.

The United States also continues to advance strategic risk reduction. As noted in our working paper (#55), risk reduction contributes to averting the danger of nuclear war and is an essential part of reducing tensions, enhancing transparency, building trust, improving the current international security environment, and enabling further arms control.

The United States has a long history of negotiating and implementing measures aimed at reducing the risk of strategic misunderstanding and conflict and preventing nuclear war. In light of current international conditions, risk reduction merits special attention at this Review Conference and we look forward to discussions on ways to carry it forward.

We note that as part of the P5 Process, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states recognized under the NPT affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. That is why we have been deeply disturbed by the Russian Federation's nuclear saber-rattling in the weeks and months after joining that statement.

My fellow colleagues, I cannot make this clearer: ANY use of a nuclear weapon would have far-reaching consequences and increase the risk of catastrophic escalation. Our understanding of what is at stake is why we work to advance the call to safeguard the security of people around the world, consistent with the NPT's objectives. As current Chair of the P5 Process I can assure that we will do our part to turn ideas about risk reduction into actions.

Mr. Chairman, as I said at the outset, our work in this committee should be built on good faith pursuit of effective measures. This is a collective pursuit. It is not enough to want a world without nuclear weapons, we all have to build that world together.

The United States recognizes its responsibility to lead on nuclear disarmament. We also recognize that we have a long road ahead of us. The instability and insecurity of today's security environment naturally affects our ability to advance disarmament efforts. But we are not helpless before the challenges facing us. Together, through persistent, pragmatic and progressive actions, we can fulfill the disarmament commitments to the NPT that we all share as state parties.

Thank you.