

Statement to the CD by Acting Under Secretary Gottemoeller

Statement to the Conference on Disarmament Honorable Rose E. Gottemoeller Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Acting United States of America

Geneva, June 4, 2009

Thank you, Mr. President,

Excellencies, colleagues:

I am pleased to be with you today, as the Conference on Disarmament resumes its mandate and its historic role in the multilateral negotiation of global nonproliferation and disarmament treaties. Your decision last week to begin negotiations on a verifiable fissile material cutoff treaty, as well as to conduct substantive discussions on other core issues, reflects growing recognition of the value of nonproliferation and disarmament agreements to international peace and security. It also demonstrates the importance of all delegations realistically appraising the present situation and showing the necessary flexibility to allow the Conference to move forward. I would like to express special appreciation and thanks to His Excellency Idriss Jazairi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, for his enormous contribution to this result.

This past Friday, President Obama recognized the importance of the decision that this body made to end its decade-long impasse and adopt a Program of Work. If I may quote him: There is no greater security challenge in the world today than turning the tide on nuclear proliferation, and pursuing the goal of a

nuclear-free world. I welcome today's important agreement at the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which will end production of fissile materials for use in atomic bombs. As I announced in Prague, a verified cut off treaty is an essential element of my vision for a world free of nuclear weapons. The treaty will help to cap nuclear arsenals, strengthen the consensus underlying the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and deny terrorists access to nuclear materials. Today's decision ends more than a decade of inactivity in the Conference on Disarmament, and signals a commitment to work together on this fundamental global challenge. It is good to see the Conference at work again. I am committed to consult and cooperate with the governments represented at the Conference on Disarmament to complete this treaty as soon as possible.

President Obama is looking forward. And as important and ground-breaking as adopting the Program of Work was, the Conference has now before it much hard work. It is our collective expectation that it will deliberate seriously as it begins to organize itself for negotiations on an FMCT, and for substantive discussions on the other issues of its agenda. We have every confidence that the same collective Presidency that led the Conference to consensus on the Program of Work can and will lead us just as effectively in the coming months.

There should be no misapprehensions or illusions on the difficulty of our task. The United States for its part is committed to doing its part. Until the FMCT is completed, I ask delegations to ensure that the CD not return to deadlock, to pledge themselves to passing in the beginning of each year a Program of Work authorizing the resumption of focused negotiations on an FMCT and discussion of related disarmament issues. Each January, we will look for the Conference to agree on its Program of Work as quickly and easily as it has adopted its annual agenda.

A month ago, many of us here today were in New York for the meeting of the NPT Preparatory Committee. The positive spirit there has, I believe, carried over to Geneva and infuses our commitment to address disarmament, starting with a

Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. This treaty has been on the international agenda for most of the nuclear age. It is time that we stopped talking about having an FMCT, and got to work to complete it. If we succeed on FMCT, we'll have taken a necessary but admittedly not sufficient step towards nuclear disarmament. It must be complemented by deeper respect for nonproliferation rules, consequences for those who violate them, improved verification of compliance, and further progress on arms control.

Together with an FMCT, the United States will also seek to bring into force the last accomplishment of this forum, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, by pursuing ratification by the United States.

The United States and Russia have begun negotiations on a new agreement to replace the strategic arms reduction treaty, which expires in just five months from now. As President Obama said in Prague in April: "We will seek a new agreement by the end of the year that is legally binding and sufficiently bold.... This will set the stage for further cuts, and we will seek to include all nuclear weapon states in this endeavor." President Obama and Russian President Medvedev have instructed that the new agreement achieve reductions lower than those in existing arms control agreements, and that the new agreement should include effective verification measures drawn from our experience in implementing START. We have been here in Geneva for the past three days with the United States delegation, engaged in productive talks with our Russian counterparts, working towards a START follow-on agreement. Our Presidents have directed that we report by July on our progress in working out a new agreement.

Mr. President,

Next year, many of us here today will meet again in New York to review implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That event will be an opportunity to restore international confidence in the Treaty and recommend ways in which it can be improved in all of its aspects: disarmament,

nonproliferation, and peaceful nuclear uses. For the Conference on Disarmament, the Program of Work sets out its tasks, prominently the negotiation of a verifiable FMCT. But the NPT Review Conference is not a finish line. For the United States, the finish line is the vision conveyed by President Obama – and which is at the core of the disarmament tasks assigned to this conference – the peace and security of a world free of nuclear weapons. That will not come as soon as we might like, but last week’s adoption of a CD Program of Work is a major step on the road to our common destination, and I’m confident it will be followed by many more.

Thank you, Mr. President.