Vienna Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons Conference  
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U.S. Statement during Discussion/General Debate

Ambassador Adam Scheinman  
Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation  
As Prepared

First, the United States would like to thank Foreign Minister Kurz and the Austrian Government for inviting us here to Vienna. We appreciated the opportunity to listen and interact with the attendees, including the many esteemed diplomats and renowned experts. We will post additional comments online. I particularly want to thank the speakers and attendees that shared their personal stories on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons use. It is our hope that their moving and truly affecting stories are broadcast around the world, helping the global public understand the dangers we face collectively.

The United States stands with all those here who seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. The United States has been and will continue to work to create the conditions for such a world with the aid of the various tools, treaties and agreements, including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty regime. We have reduced our nuclear stockpile by 85% since its Cold War high. We have taken all our non-strategic nuclear bombers and nuclear-capable heavy bombers off day-to-day alert. All ICBMs and SLBMs are targeted on open-ocean areas. We are also de-MIRVing all our ICBMs. Through our Nuclear Posture Review and follow-on study, we have reduced the role of nuclear weapons in the defense of our nation and our allies and it is the policy of the United States to not develop new nuclear warheads.

We have increased investments to ensure the safety and security of our nuclear arsenal and our enterprise. When we identify opportunities to improve our system, we act on them. We are also making sure we have the technical skills and world-class talent that will be needed to fashion and sustain a world without nuclear weapons. Finally, we have made clear to the Russian Federation that we are prepared to engage on the full range of issues affecting strategic stability and that
there are real and meaningful steps we should be taking that can contribute to a more predictable, safer security environment.

In June 2013 in Berlin, President Obama stated US willingness to negotiate a reduction of up to one-third of our deployed strategic warheads from levels established in the New START Treaty. Progress requires a willing partner and a conducive strategic environment.

As we can see from this conference, we collectively have the growing political will to pursue a practical disarmament agenda. We must also have a practical way to do it.

A critical key to progress is the creation of verification and monitoring tools that will help us reach our mutual goals. Verification will become increasingly complex at lower numbers of nuclear weapons, while requirements for accurately determining compliance will dramatically increase. Everyone here and around the world who shares our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons should join us in devoting ample time and energy to address this challenge right now.

That is why the United States has announced the creation of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. The United States proposes to work with both nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapons states to better understand the technical problems of verifying nuclear disarmament agreements, and to develop solutions. The United Kingdom and Norway have already pioneered this type of work. This Partnership will expand on this and involve the creativity and expertise of talented individuals outside governments. We are pleased that the Nuclear Threat Initiative will join us as prime partner.

We look forward to expanding our efforts on this front in the coming weeks and months. The United States wants and needs your help to find and create the ways to trust and verify further nuclear reductions. As President Obama said in Prague in 2009, in order to create the conditions for the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, "the voices for peace and progress must be raised together."

As we have said, underpinning all of our efforts, stretching back decades, has been our clear understanding of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use.
We will not relent in the practical and responsible pursuit of our disarmament goals and we are glad to be among so many who share these goals.

Thank you.