Statement by Ambassador Robert A. Wood
Alternate Representative
Delegation of the United States of America

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Thematic Discussion on Regional Disarmament and Security
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— For Delivery —

Mr. Chairman,

Reflecting our enduring interest in promoting international peace and prosperity, the United States is strongly committed to strengthening partnerships and cooperation with regional and other inter-governmental organizations. Years of experience have affirmed that nonproliferation and disarmament initiatives at the global and regional levels are mutually reinforcing.

Mr. Chairman, the United States sees great value in collaborative approaches across the whole spectrum of nonproliferation and arms control initiatives. For example, in East Asia, the regional nonproliferation and disarmament architecture has steadily developed and matured to address the challenges to the global regime. The ASEAN Regional Forum just finished its second round of Inter-Sessional Meetings on Nonproliferation and Disarmament, and the East Asia Summit also has emerged as a premier forum for discussing regional security and nonproliferation issues. Both fora have opened opportunities for workshops devoted to building national capacity and establishing and strengthening regional cooperation. In the western hemisphere, the Organization of American States (OAS) Member States are using workshops and exercises to enhance their bio-incident readiness and response capabilities. These activities serve to strengthen coordination between government officials and representatives from a number of agencies involved with emergency response. Developing partnerships between regions and international organizations is also key, and organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and others deserve a great deal of praise for ongoing and collaborative efforts to address many development challenges at the regional level.

Mr. Chairman, we know from history that strong partnerships take sustained effort. Unfortunately, Russia’s deliberate and repeated violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine has undermined the security structure in Europe all of us have worked to develop after the Cold War. While arms control agreements cannot substitute for adherence to international law and responsible behavior in the international community, in the face of today’s security challenges, we are committed
to finding a way forward to preserve, strengthen, and modernize conventional arms control, based on key principles and commitments.

We have other challenges. Many delegations have mentioned proliferation crises in the Middle East and Northeast Asia. We must seek to ensure that international verification of NPT obligations remains effective and robust, and that parties uphold the integrity of the Treaty by addressing noncompliance. Together, we can ensure that the IAEA has the authority and resources needed to implement safeguards that meet our common expectations. The United States is committed to working to bring parties together for the goal of a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone – and we will continue working intensively to convene the Conference as soon as the arrangements can be agreed by the regional parties. There is no substitute for direct dialogue among the states in the region. We remain optimistic that such consensus can be achieved. In every state in the Middle East, there are diplomats with vision, creativity and determination, and we will not stop our efforts to work with them in pursuit of this goal.

Mr. Chairman, as we face global challenges together, we should not forget that relationships and interconnections shape our collective work and activities. We commend regional efforts by states to demonstrate their commitment to all three of the NPT’s pillars, including through establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the South Pacific. These zones facilitate regional cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthen the global nuclear nonproliferation regime, and contribute to the goal of nuclear disarmament. Also, consistent with our shared objective of a world free of nuclear weapons, we continue to work toward the goal of seeing South Asia become free of nuclear weapons. To further this goal, the United States has regular ongoing senior level dialogues with officials in the region which cover a range of issues including nonproliferation, disarmament, and regional stability.

Mr. Chairman, as noted in our previous statements, the United States is firmly committed to fulfilling our obligations and working with the international community. It is important that nuclear-weapon-states and non-nuclear-weapon-states see nonproliferation and disarmament not as competing goals but as mutually reinforcing efforts toward the common goal of reducing nuclear threats. All states benefit from these efforts, and we have a common obligation to continue making progress in that direction, step-by-step.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.