

**United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament**  
**Remarks by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Anita Friedt**  
**United States of America**  
**September 26, 2013**

Mr. President, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today at the High Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament. Acting Under Secretary Rose Gottemoeller was recently at a conference in Prague where the phrase, "May you live in interesting times," came up in her discussion. This phrase is generally regarded as ominous – the implication being that a person in an interesting world is doomed to a tumultuous and possibly dangerous existence. There is no doubt that we live in interesting times, but I don't accept the inevitability of uncertainty and danger. We have the power to control and shape our future. We are able to see the challenges facing us and to find ways to overcome those challenges. That is exactly what President Obama had in mind when he came to Prague four years ago to speak about America's intent to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

Today is actually an auspicious occasion to be talking about disarmament. It was 50 years ago this week that the U.S. Senate gave its advice and consent for the ratification of the Limited Test Ban Treaty, paving the way for its entry into force just a few weeks later. That Treaty came less than a year after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The fact that we came so close to the edge of the nuclear abyss and turned around to produce such an important treaty should serve as a lesson to us all. It is a testament to what we can accomplish when we work together.

Flash forward fifty years and we are still moving ahead. As President Obama reaffirmed in Berlin on June 19, the United States is committed to achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. Our efforts to achieve this long-term goal are built upon a realistic framework of iterative, mutually reinforcing, and progressive steps.

This "step-by-step" approach is the most productive and effective path to a world without nuclear weapons. Each step builds on the accomplishment and momentum of the preceding steps and takes into account changes in the international security environment.

Our focus should be on where we are and the steps in front of us. For example, the New START Treaty is in force and its implementation is going very well. That Treaty will reduce the United States and the Russian Federation arsenals to the lowest numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons since the 1950's.

With an eye towards the next step in nuclear reductions, the Obama Administration has reviewed the guidance of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review and intends to pursue negotiated reductions with the Russian Federation so that we can continue to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures. For the United States, these reductions are possible because our new guidance takes further steps toward reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy.

In addition to the steps we intend to pursue with Russia, we are also working with the other Nuclear Weapons States on disarmament-related issues, including implementation of our obligations under the NPT and the 2010 NPT Action Plan. This engagement has moved beyond dialogue to concrete actions. For example, under China's leadership we are developing a common glossary of nuclear terms and we

are also working together in development of the CTBT verification regime. We intend to continue the dialogue at the political level and concrete work at the expert level, so important in shared steps towards a world without nuclear weapons.

We have made great progress over the last five years, but moving ahead will require patience and persistence from all nations.

In the broader multilateral context, the United States believes that we should continue to focus our energy on concrete, achievable steps, starting with the immediate commencement of long delayed negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). All NPT Parties concur that the next priority step toward nuclear disarmament in the multilateral context is negotiation and conclusion of an FMCT. We are profoundly disappointed that the CD has been prevented from initiating such negotiations. It is time for action. Of course, negotiating and implementing each of the steps toward disarmament is hard work. The FMCT is no exception. Its negotiations will no doubt force nations to make tough decisions and, at times, the process might be downright challenging and difficult. However, a process that leads to a verifiable ban on fissile material production for nuclear weapons will make the world a safer place for our fellow citizens, friends and families. That should be the thought that drives us all.

And, while we unequivocally share the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons with those colleagues who have expressed frustration about the pace of nuclear disarmament, we believe there simply are no shortcuts to achieving that goal. There is no substitute for the iterative work of diplomacy, negotiation, dismantlement, and verification against the backdrop of profound national security interests in the dynamic international environment. In the face of this reality, the NPT continues to provide our framework -- and the 2010 NPT Action Plan our roadmap -- for continued progress. In that regard, we are concerned by initiatives that could circumvent that framework or seek to reinterpret its legal basis. Our concern stems not only from a matter of principle, but also from the strong conviction that concepts that take us away from the charted path are unrealistic and will distract us from making real progress on the goal we all share.

Mr. President, our reason to move to the next steps in disarmament is simple -- it is in our mutual interest, in political and security terms. As I have said recently, it is no secret that we have a lot to discuss and debate. This does not mean we stop trying to move ahead. Even in the darkest days of the Cold War, the United States and Russia found it in our mutual interest to work together on reducing the nuclear threat. And it is a fact that ensuring security and stability at lower levels of arms -- the work of disarmament and nonproliferation -- is a shared responsibility, and not for the U.S. and Russia, or the five Nuclear Weapon States alone. All States can help contribute to the conditions for disarmament. And, in this context, concerns about non-compliance by a few states with their obligations must be addressed.

Let us all commit ourselves to the hard work ahead. The United States remains committed to move boldly to pursue continuing disarmament steps. We ask that you join us.

Thank you very much.