



Regional Issues Relating to the NPT

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Mr. Chairman, our discussion today presents an opportunity to review and assess regional developments as they relate to the NPT [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons]. My remarks will focus on the response to cases of noncompliance -- the primary challenge facing the Treaty. In his March statement of this year, President Bush called for strong action to confront noncompliance in order to preserve and strengthen the NPT's nonproliferation undertakings. To enhance our mutual security, the international community must work together to tackle the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Over recent years, NPT parties have faced significant challenges, particularly from states that have cheated on their obligations and defied the international community.

Thankfully, there has been progress in some areas. Libya's strategic decision to eliminate its nuclear weapons program and verifiably meet its international nonproliferation obligations recognized that pursuit of WMD [weapons of mass destruction] detracted from, rather than increased, its security. It is a recent example of how states can rebuild confidence in their nonproliferation credentials. A newly elected government is leading Iraq in a new direction, away from the Saddam Hussein era of pursuing nuclear and other WMD capabilities. Regrettably, North Korea and Iran retain nuclear ambitions and have been found to have violated the Treaty.

These cases have a direct impact on NPT universality, an issue on which many colleagues here have focused their remarks. The United States shares the view that the Conference should reinforce the goal of universal NPT adherence. That goal is for Israel, India, and Pakistan to eventually join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon States. We recognize that taking this step is a sovereign decision. In order to achieve universal adherence, the NPT must provide a viable security framework that ensures compliance. Here, I would like to recall the remarks made by the Secretary General during his opening plenary remarks. He said, "the more we work to resolve regional conflicts, the less incentives states will have to go nuclear. The more confidence states have in our collective security system, the more prepared they will be to rely on a strengthened nonproliferation regime, rather than deterrence. And thus the nearer we will be to the vital goal of universal membership to the Treaty." The United States welcomes and encourages all nonparties to accede to the NPT as soon as possible, and we continue to support this goal by insisting that all NPT parties comply with their obligations. Ultimately, a rigorous approach to compliance will help promote NPT universality by demonstrating to non-parties that the Treaty can provide meaningful and enduring security benefits.

MIDDLE EAST

In that regard, achieving a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East remains a key U.S. foreign policy goal. We are committed to a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and continue to advance the Road Map to realize President Bush's vision of two states -- Israel and Palestine -- living side by side in peace and security.

Within the context of a stable, comprehensive regional peace, the United States supports the objective of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. A comprehensive peace would likely hasten the end of WMD programs in the region, which might facilitate Israel's accession to the NPT. However, progress toward this goal requires the creation and cultivation of a political environment in the Middle East that will reduce the causes of hostility in the region and gradually move states toward a regional situation that is conducive to a verifiable WMD free zone. Peace will also contribute to regional security by generating the confidence and trust needed to address the complex issues associated with establishing a WMD free zone.

In September 2000, the 44th IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] General Conference asked the Director General to "make arrangements to convene a forum in which participants from the Middle East and other interested parties could learn from the experience of other regions, including the area of confidence building relevant to the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone." We support regional aspirations to hold this forum and hope that a way forward can be found to hold discussions.

Mr. Chairman, there is little hope of establishing an agreement to create a regional WMD free zone unless nations of that region implement and uphold existing agreements to which they are parties. Countries must be held accountable to their commitments.

Let me now return to my government's concerns about noncompliance that bear directly on the prospects for a Middle East free of WMD. In seven reports beginning in 2003, the IAEA has now confirmed that Iran pursued a covert nuclear program for nearly two decades. Working covertly, Iran aimed to develop uranium enrichment, plutonium reprocessing, and other technologies used in making nuclear weapons. Iran's desire for these sensitive technologies, even in the face of strong international concern, is inconsistent with Iran's energy and economic interests, squanders money better spent on pressing economic and social needs of the Iranian people, destabilizes the region, and is a serious cause for international alarm.

Iran insists that its program is transparent and solely peaceful. These claims are contradicted by the facts. IAEA Director General ElBaradei told the IAEA Board in February, "in view of the past undeclared nature of significant aspects of Iran's nuclear program, a confidence deficit has been created, and it is therefore essential that Iran work closely with the Agency in a proactive manner ... to build necessary confidence." At that same Board meeting, IAEA Deputy Director General (DDG) Goldschmidt described the latest Iranian attempts to hide, mislead, and delay the work of IAEA inspectors. I refer my colleagues to DDG Goldschmidt's March 1 report to the IAEA Board for the details on this, but I want to emphasize that rather than take steps to bolster confidence, on the eve of the opening of this Conference, Iran announced that it is considering resuming uranium conversion work, despite Iran's commitment in the November 2004 Paris agreement with the EU-3 to fully suspend that work.

While Iran trumpets its belated and incomplete cooperation, the IAEA reports that Iran still denies inspectors the transparency and cooperation they need to fully fulfill their duties. Moreover, Iran continues to defy explicit requests from past IAEA Board resolutions. Iran continues to disregard the IAEA Board's calls not to proceed with the construction of a heavy water research reactor at Arak -- a reactor well suited to production of plutonium that Iran does not need for peaceful purposes. Iran has failed to provide a credible explanation for its rush to complete this destabilizing project, which the IAEA confirmed in March is still ongoing. In addition, Iran's cooperation falls far short of the standard and expectations set forth in IAEA Board resolutions. Those resolutions called on Iran to extend "full and prompt cooperation to the Director General" and "to provide any access deemed necessary by the

Agency in accordance with the Additional Protocol." Iranian refusals to allow full and prompt access to locations of concern, to Iranian experts, or to nuclear related documentation, are unacceptable. The IAEA will be unable to resolve the questions raised by Iran's longstanding clandestine nuclear program and breaches of its Safeguards Agreement unless Iran provides full cooperation. Iran has also yet to ratify and officially implement the Additional Protocol for strengthened IAEA safeguards.

Mr. Chairman, my government feels strongly that the IAEA Board should have reported, pursuant to the IAEA Statute, Iran's violations of its safeguards obligations to the United Nations Security Council when that noncompliance was first confirmed to the IAEA Board. This would have reinforced the IAEA's essential role in investigating Iran's past and ongoing nuclear activities and in monitoring both its safeguards obligations and its most recent suspension pledge.

The Security Council has the necessary international legal and political authority that may be required to bring this issue to a successful and peaceful diplomatic resolution. Today, we join with the international community in supporting the ongoing efforts of the "EU-3," the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomacy. Should Iran withdraw from that engagement and break its pledge to the EU-3 to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, then the U.S. would join the EU-3 in supporting an immediate report to the UNSC [UN Security Council].

Mr. Chairman, the challenge posed by Iran's nuclear program must be a *central* concern to all of us. That is why the United States is focusing the Conference's attention on this problem. Iran violated its NPT Article III safeguards obligations by pursuing a secret program aiming to acquire the most sensitive elements of the nuclear fuel cycle. The only plausible explanation for this longstanding pattern of deception is that Iran has been pursuing a nuclear weapons capability in violation of Article II. Given its history of clandestine nuclear activities and documented efforts to deceive the international community, Iran must now demonstrate that it no longer seeks to acquire a nuclear weapons capability.

Only the full cessation and dismantling of Iran's fissile material production efforts can begin to give us any confidence that Iran is no longer pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. We are not attempting to rewrite the NPT, as Iran has claimed in an attempt to divert attention from its own violations. Nor do we aim to deny NPT compliant states the exercise of their legitimate rights. On the contrary, our position stems from our commitment to uphold the goals and rules of the NPT -- and to its central nonproliferation undertakings. Iran has deliberately circumvented its NPT obligations for almost two decades, and must be held accountable. This is not just a United States position. We know from our discussions with many countries represented here today that there is a strong international consensus that Iran must not possess a nuclear weapons capability. Toward this end, we, like many others, support the ongoing European efforts to provide objective guarantees against Iran obtaining such a capability. For the sake of regional and global security, including the integrity of NPT and hopes for future NPT universality, we look forward to working with the entire international community to convince Iran to finally forgo the nuclear path it has so far chosen.

NORTHEAST ASIA

North Korea's nuclear weapons program also presents a threat to regional and global security and an urgent challenge to the global nonproliferation regime. North Korea has repeatedly violated international nonproliferation obligations and announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT. It could produce and then export fissile material or weapons to other rogue states or terrorists. These dangers affect us all. They must not and will not be ignored.

North Korea's noncompliance with its NPT obligations surfaced more than a decade ago. Indeed, North Korea has never met its obligations under the NPT and related IAEA safeguards. Despite a good faith effort by many countries and the IAEA, North Korea consistently refused to comply with its obligations. In 2002, as the United States was prepared to launch a comprehensive diplomatic approach that might have improved relations between our two countries, it became clear that North Korea was pursuing a clandestine uranium enrichment program in addition to a plutonium-based weapons program. North Korea acknowledged such a program to the United States in October 2002. North Korea's subsequent denials of its uranium enrichment program are contradicted by A.Q. Khan's confession of the uranium enrichment assistance his network rendered to North Korea, as well as other reports. In January 2004, North Korea showed a group of U.S. scientists that the spent-fuel storage building at Yongbyon was empty of the almost 8,000 spent fuel rods previously stored there and presented material that it claimed was plutonium separated from those fuel rods. North Korea also stated in February 2005, that it had manufactured nuclear weapons and most recently said that it shut off its five megawatt reactor in order to increase "its deterrent." Today, we believe that North Korea's plutonium-based and its uranium-based weapons programs are both still ongoing.

North Korea's nuclear programs have deepened its isolation. While all options remain on the table, the United States has made clear repeatedly, and at the highest levels of our government, that we seek a peaceful, diplomatic end to North Korea's nuclear program. This multilateral problem requires a multilateral solution and, in the wake of North Korea's admission to a U.S. delegation visiting Pyongyang that it had a uranium enrichment program, and after the IAEA Board reported North Korea's safeguards noncompliance to the UN Security Council, we and other concerned states in the region have taken steps to address these problems. Since August 2003, the United States has engaged in three rounds of Six Party Talks; the most recent took place in Beijing in June 2004. All parties to the Talks, including North Korea, agreed that our common objective is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Although all parties agreed in June to hold a fourth round of talks before the end of September 2004, North Korea has refused to return to the table. North Korea must understand that resolution of the problem it created by violating its obligations can only come about through the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of its entire nuclear program, including both plutonium reprocessing and uranium enrichment.

SOUTH ASIA

The situation in South Asia also poses unique challenges. Let me reiterate that the United States remains committed to NPT universality. We recognize, however, that India and Pakistan may not join the Treaty for the foreseeable future. We remain deeply concerned by the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in South Asia and do not believe they enhance regional security. We welcome recent signs of improved relations between India and Pakistan. We continue to urge both countries to end their nuclear and missile competition, and to discuss and implement confidence-building measures designed to reduce regional tensions and diminish risks that nuclear weapons could be used, either intentionally or accidentally, in a crisis.

As part of our active bilateral dialogues with India and Pakistan, we continue to urge these countries not to conduct nuclear tests, to bring an early end to the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons -- and in that context to support the immediate start of negotiations on a fissile material cutoff treaty -- to prevent onward proliferation, and to bring their export controls in line with international standards.

We also remain cognizant of our nonproliferation commitments and objectives when considering how to improve our bilateral relations with each country. Our actions with both India and Pakistan continue to be consistent with our NPT obligations and with our commitment to the Nuclear Suppliers Group Guidelines.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, as President Bush said, the NPT is a key legal barrier to nuclear proliferation. It makes a critical contribution to international security. Concerted international action is needed to tackle noncompliance. If we collectively are not able to address the critical cases of noncompliance now confronting the Treaty, we risk undermining its credibility, as well as the global nonproliferation regime and the security upon which we depend. For these reasons, we must stress the importance of strict compliance with NPT obligations and create the conditions that reinforce and advance regional stability and security, and thus improve conditions for genuine NPT universality.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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