Statement by the United States
Thematic Discussion Clusters 1-4
UNFC October 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States will continue to take steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, while ensuring the U.S. strategic deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective and that U.S. extended deterrence commitments to our allies remain strong and credible. We will head off costly arms races and re-establish U.S. credibility as a leader in arms control.

That is why in its first days, the Biden-Harris Administration worked with Russia to extend the New START Treaty for the maximum period possible, ensuring its limits, transparency, and verification mechanisms provide predictability and a firm foundation while we seek additional arms control measures with Russia. To that end we have embarked on a Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia to lay the groundwork for such measures.

The PRC is building a larger, more diverse nuclear arsenal than the “minimum deterrent” it has touted for decades. This rapid build-up has become more difficult to hide and highlights how China is deviating from decades of nuclear strategy based around minimum deterrence. These advances highlight why it is in everyone’s interest that nuclear powers talk to one another directly about reducing nuclear dangers and avoiding miscalculation. We encourage Beijing to engage with us on practical measures to reduce the risks of destabilizing arms races and conflict. Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the topic of chemical and biological weapons, the use of chemical weapons anywhere, anytime by anyone is unacceptable. The poisoning of Alexei Navalny was an intolerable act – and one that the United States and all responsible nations have condemned in the strongest possible terms. Toward that end, the United States and forty-four (44) other co-sponsors put forward questions to the Russian Federation at the OPCW last week under Article IX of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We urge Russia to answer fully the questions submitted and provide a full accounting of this heinous use of a Novichok nerve agent within its borders.

Similarly, we must hold the Syrian Arab Republic accountable for its continued flouting of its obligations under the CWC and Security Council Resolution 2118. In this regard, the OPCW in April took decisive action to adopt a decision to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the CWC. There must be consequences for the use of chemical weapons. The United States reaffirms its full support of the OPCW.

Preventing future outbreaks – whether natural, accidental, or deliberate in origin – is critical. The U.S. hopes States can break the two-decade deadlock over strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention at the 2022 Review Conference. We will propose that States Parties adopt measures to strengthen the BWC immediately and, simultaneously, take steps to intensively explore measures to strengthen implementation and promote compliance. These steps cannot wait: the pandemic has taught us that we don’t know how much time we have.
On the subject of outer space, the United States believes that there is a common interest in maintaining peace and security in outer space for the benefit of all. The Administration’s Interim National Security Strategic Guidance clearly states that we will explore and use outer space to the benefit of humanity, and ensure the safety, stability, and security of outer space activities. At the same time, we take note of the desire of all countries to maintain space as a peaceful and sustainable environment, while reducing threats to space systems and space operations, and preventing conflict from occurring in outer space. However, we recognize that space remains a domain of competition and we must take steps to reduce uncertainty and manage the risk that competition will lead to conflict. To effectively address these threats and risks, we need to move beyond a singular focus on the prevention of an arms race in space, towards an expanded approach that takes into account threats from ground-based systems. To that end, the Administration believes that we must promote shared norms on space. That is why the United States supports the United Kingdom’s resolution on Reducing Space Threats and why we will vote against Russia’s cynical No First Placement resolution.

Lastly Mr. Chairman,

The United States is resolute in our support for the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, and we rely on the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes about peace and security at all levels, free from threat or violence.

Our full statements on clusters one through four will be posted to the Compendium.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.