



*U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva
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Statement by U.S. Ambassador Eric Javits to the Conference on Disarmament

Mr. President,

As a recent arrival to Geneva and a newcomer to duties in this body, I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to many other colleagues who have welcomed me in such warm and friendly ways. I assure you that I shall do everything I can to cooperate with your efforts in the Presidency, and with theirs, to reinvigorate the Conference on Disarmament and begin fulfilling our primary task: negotiating global treaties in the field of arms control and disarmament.

Much of what I will say today has already been said by others, and I ask your indulgence if I echo sentiments often expressed here. Yet letting each other know where we stand is an indispensable element of seeking consensus in this august body.

So, to be perfectly blunt: After so many years of deadlock and delay, to waste yet another year would be an evasion of our collective responsibility. History may judge at what point this comatose body actually expired, or at what stage continued inaction became dereliction of duty or even inexcusable negligence. In any case, these questions would eventually arise.

I do not want them asked or answered. No, Mr. President, my government and I want the Conference at long last to adopt a comprehensive program of work along the lines proposed by one of your most distinguished predecessors, Ambassador Celso Amorim of Brazil.

New patterns and methods

Last September 11, criminal terrorists carried out perfidious and appallingly destructive attacks in New York and Washington. Within the ensuing days and weeks, many countries joined with the United States in confronting and combating this assault on innocent civilians and on the fundamental tenets of civilization itself.

We deeply appreciated this demonstration of solidarity in the common cause. We are encouraged that there has been substantial progress in rooting out the al-Qaida network, and that the oppressive Taliban regime has been overthrown. This has enabled the people of Afghanistan to form an interim government that is far more attuned to their aspirations and needs.

History may eventually cite the September 11 events as a turning point in our mutual quest for a better world, since utter revulsion at the terrorist attacks created unprecedented patterns of cooperation among governments and peoples.

On November 14, President Bush and [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin issued a joint statement in which they declared that the United States and Russia "have overcome the legacy of the Cold War," adding that "Neither country regards the other as an enemy or threat." The two Presidents cited their joint responsibility to contribute to international security, then said that the United States and Russia "are determined to work together, and with other nations and international organizations, including the United Nations, to promote security, economic well-being, and a peaceful, prosperous, free world."

On December 13, President Bush announced that the United States would withdraw from the 1972 ABM [Anti-Ballistic Missile] Treaty, pursuant to its provisions that permit withdrawal after six

months notice. The United States knows with certainty that some States, including a number that have sponsored terrorist attacks in the past, are investing heavily to acquire ballistic missiles that could conceivably be used against the United States, its Allies, and friends. Although this is an especially sinister development in and of itself, it is compounded by the fact that many of these same States, not content just to acquire missiles, are also seeking to develop chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. As President Bush emphasized last week in his State of the Union address, "We must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world."

To reduce the possibility that missiles will be used as tools of coercion and aggression, the United States needs updated means of dissuasion. Judiciously limited missile defenses do not just provide a shield against a stray missile or accidental launch; they are also an essential element of a strategy to discourage potential adversaries from seeking to acquire or use weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles -- by removing the assurance that such weapons would have military utility.

History teaches us that despite the best efforts of statesmen and strategists, intelligence gathering, diplomacy, and deterrence measures will not always prove entirely effective. Missile defenses will provide an insurance policy against the catastrophic effects of their failure, at least in relation to a handful of missiles that might be launched by accident, by a non-State actor, or by a State of particular concern.

The United States is now engaged in discussions with Russia on measures to verify reductions in nuclear warheads under the general framework established by the START I Treaty. I am confident that in the coming months, greater attention will also be given to transparency, confidence-building measures, and expanded cooperation on missile defenses. At the same time, there will also be more extensive joint work in the critically important field of non-proliferation. And the work we need to do in these regards will not be with Russia alone, by any means.

In discussions with a wide range of Allies and friends, representatives of the U.S. Government have explained why we believe that moving beyond the ABM Treaty will contribute to international peace and security. Although the details of these discussions must of course remain private, we find it particularly significant that in mid-December representatives of the United States and China met in Beijing to review our withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and discuss the possible start of a broad strategic dialogue. The United States looks forward to further opportunities to explore strategic issues and appropriate methods for enhancing mutual understanding and confidence in the context of increasingly cooperative relations between the U.S. and China -- as will be discussed on February 21 and 22, when President Bush visits Beijing at the invitation of Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

Arms control approaches

Some critics have interpreted the U.S. decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty as evidence of so-called "unilateralism," i.e., a general lack of support for multilateral arms control agreements. This interpretation is lamentably mistaken.

The United States agrees that multilateralism is "a core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation with a view to maintaining and strengthening universal norms and enlarging their scope" -- as stated in this year's U.N. General Assembly resolution 56/24 T. The resolution also underlined the fact that "progress is urgently needed in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation in order to help maintain international peace and security and to contribute to global efforts against terrorism," and we fully agree with that.

Certain other consensus resolutions of the General Assembly were even more directly aimed at the Member States of the Conference on Disarmament. For example, resolution 56/24 J urged that the CD agree on a program of work that includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Further, resolution 56/26 B reaffirmed the role of the CD as "the single multilateral disarmament

ment negotiating forum of the international community" and called on it "to fulfill that role in the light of the evolving international situation."

Let no one doubt that the United States values this Conference and its role as the only existing multilateral forum for arms control and disarmament negotiations. As Under Secretary of State [for Arms Control and International Security John] Bolton pointed out, the United States supports and upholds many multilateral arms control agreements. For example:

-- The Non-Proliferation Treaty (1967). -- The Outer Space Treaty (1967). -- The Biological Weapons Convention (1972). -- The Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (1990). -- The Chemical Weapons Convention (1992).

Although maintaining international peace and security is our primary goal and overarching purpose, in the final analysis preserving national security is likewise necessary and essential. Mutual advantage is one key factor, for any arms control treaty must enhance the security of all States Parties. Basic obligations need to be well-focused, clear, and practical, so States will have a rational basis for committing themselves to the future treaty. Compliance and enforcement are priority issues and also quite critical. After all, unenforceable agreements that are easily ignored make no positive contribution whatever to international peace and security.

To the contrary, ineffective treaties can create false illusions of security that may impede or prevent realistic and quite appropriate preparations for individual or collective self-defense. One cogent example is the treaties of the 1920s and 1930s that limited the tonnage of naval warships that States Parties were permitted to build. These treaties clearly failed the test, for certain States evaded the limits by building larger and more powerful warships than those the negotiators envisioned.

In sum, Mr. President, arms control and disarmament approaches are not all equally effective. Further, they are only a means to an end, a tool that States can choose to employ -- or not -- in our mutual efforts to ensure international peace and security. And just as a screwdriver would be a poor choice for a carpenter who needs to hammer in a nail, it is clear that arms control and disarmament approaches may not always be suited to the circumstances at hand.

So the issue is how this forum should be employed now, after years and years of paralysis. The work-program proposals that Brazilian Ambassador Amorim tabled on August 24, 2000 (CD/1624) specified that the Conference would conduct negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, pursuant to a thoughtful and complete framework that the international community has repeatedly reaffirmed -- the so-called Shannon mandate and report, as drafted by former Canadian Ambassador Gerald Shannon, the CD's special coordinator, and published on March 24, 1995 (CD/1299).

Ambassador Amorim also envisioned the establishment of ad hoc committees on two other high-priority topics, nuclear disarmament and outer space. In contrast, however, he proposed broad-ranging discussion of these other two high-priority topics, not treaty negotiations. This, of course, is the only appropriate approach when Member States have not reached agreement on a realistic framework for seeking to negotiate a multilateral treaty.

In order to develop such a framework, Member States would have to work out convincing answers to the key questions I identified earlier. In other words, Member States would need to believe that some new multilateral agreement actually would make an effective contribution to international peace and security, and that it also would not have adverse effects on national security. These conclusions, in turn, would have to be closely associated with cogent analysis of several key issues (e.g., mutual advantage, clear and practical focus on appropriate technical aspects, assurance of compliance, effective measures of enforcement).

These questions are highly complex. The answers certainly do not exist now, and the United States sees no reason to believe they will suddenly become evident. To the contrary, we are firmly convinced that multilateral outcomes can only be the result of an extended process of transparency and engage-

ment: Transparency in regard to actions and goals, engagement in a joint search for practical solutions and mutual advantage. In that sincere and earnest search, there is no substitute, there can be no substitute, for serious and thoughtful discussion. There should likewise be no doubt, Mr. President, that the U.S. delegation will engage, actively and energetically, in the work of all subordinate bodies the Conference decides to establish.

To permit any and all forms of active engagement, the Conference on Disarmament must finally get down to work. We have an agreed mandate for negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. We have agreement in principle that Member States can conduct broad-ranging discussion in ad hoc committees that will deal with the other two high-priority issues, nuclear disarmament and outer space. In addition, we all agree that the Conference's overall program of work can include appropriate consideration of several other substantive and procedural topics. So let us seize on commitments and goals we all share.

Mr. President, the international community's enhanced cooperation in the aftermath of September 11 gives us added reason to hope that every Member State will agree to end the deadlock and have the wisdom to engage, thereby applying our collective energies to constructive and productive tasks. In that event, history would record that the Conference on Disarmament was ultimately destined to succeed, not to wither and fade away.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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