

**Ambassador Burk's Remarks to the 8th ROK-UN Joint Conference on
Disarmament and Nonproliferation Issues**

November 16, 2009 – Jeju, Republic of Korea

**“Moving Towards a Nuclear Weapon-Free World: A Common Vision and
Shared Responsibilities”**

Introduction:

Before I begin, I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Korea and the United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for organizing this important event. Conferences such as this are facilitating a constructive dialogue and creating opportunities for further collaboration as we prepare for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 2010 Review Conference. We are here because we share a common commitment to a strong treaty-based nonproliferation regime. Seldom, if ever, does our work stand alone, or remain isolated and unaffected by events and developments outside of our direct area of expertise or responsibility. And this is an excellent opportunity to share ideas on some of the most timely and challenging topics of the day.

Our ultimate goal is clear. We heard it first in Prague, when President Obama declared America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." Achieving this vision is a tremendous challenge, but there is little of value that comes easily, and we have opportunities now to make real progress if we work together to seize them.

Today I will be discussing disarmament, one of the pillars of the NPT, in the context of the other two: nonproliferation and peaceful uses. These three pillars are integrally related, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing. Without a strong, reliable nonproliferation regime, it would be too risky to expand nuclear energy worldwide, and prospects for nuclear disarmament would be undermined. Without disarmament, international support for nonproliferation would be insufficient to ensure the regime can meet today's challenges. These challenges, in turn, would undermine international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. And without safe and reliable access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, a key benefit of the basic bargain of the NPT would not be realized.

Disarmament:

All countries have an obligation to help address the challenges posted by nuclear weapons, beginning with the nuclear weapons states. In Prague, President Obama stated that the United States will reduce both the numbers and the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and will urge others to do the same. The President outlined an agenda of interim steps that will not only move us closer to the long-term goal, but also reinforce the global nonproliferation regime and raise the barriers to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and materials by terrorist groups. We are prepared to lead by example and demonstrate concrete progress on disarmament and strengthen the regime through actions taken unilaterally, bilaterally with Russia, among the P5, and through other multilateral fora.

In one of these steps, U.S. and Russian negotiators are working diligently to complete the negotiation of a follow-on agreement to START. At the July summit in Moscow, Presidents Obama and Medvedev issued a Joint Understanding that guides our negotiations today. The new START treaty will include effective verification measures drawn from the experience in implementing START. As President Obama asserted in Prague, the achievement of a legally binding and effectively verifiable agreement will set the stage for further cuts and eventually a disarmament process that would include all nuclear weapon states.

In Prague the President committed to “immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).” The Obama Administration is also working hard to persuade the other states whose ratification is necessary for CTBT’s entry into force to do so. In the interim, we have reaffirmed our unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing – in place since 1992 – and continue to call on other governments to do the same.

In addition, the United States is committed to seeking a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons purposes. After more than ten years of gridlock, Geneva’s Conference on Disarmament (CD) adopted a robust program of work that includes negotiation of a verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT). The United States looks forward to working with its CD partners to begin negotiations on this important agreement when the Conference reconvenes in January. Pending that result, we have reaffirmed our decades-long unilateral moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

The stage is set for important progress on disarmament and arms control, and we believe that the political will is there to do so. However progress on disarmament cannot be made only on a bilateral basis. We are currently working with our colleagues in the P5- China, France, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom to fulfill our collective commitment towards implementing Article VI of the NPT. In recent years the P5 have enjoyed increasingly closer coordination, releasing statements at the 2008 and 2009 NPT PrepComs. Since this past May, we have met in Geneva, London, and New York, and will continue to work to harmonize efforts through the RevCon next year.

We are committed to disarmament not only to fulfill our treaty obligations, but because it is in our security interests to do so. In the words of President Obama, the United States has a moral responsibility to act. Secretary Clinton, in her speech to the U.S. Institute of Peace on October 21st, said, *“We and Russia deploy more nuclear weapons than we need or could ever potentially use without destroying our ways of life...Clinging to nuclear weapons in excess of our security needs does not make the United States safer. And the nuclear status quo is neither desirable nor sustainable. It gives other countries motivation or the excuse to pursue their own nuclear options.”*

Non-nuclear weapon states, however, bear no less responsibility to work constructively and actively to prevent further proliferation and help create the conditions for nuclear disarmament efforts to succeed. This responsibility extends beyond the decision to forego their own nuclear capability and to accept IAEA safeguards to verify their commitments. It must continue through the participation of those non-nuclear weapon states in rigorous, collective efforts to impede and dissuade other countries from acquiring nuclear weapons. These efforts benefit the international community as a whole, since the proliferation of nuclear weapons to new states is a global threat to peace and security. Through such efforts all states can help create the conditions necessary to achieve the nuclear free world that we seek.

Nonproliferation

A strong nonproliferation regime, anchored by the NPT, is the foundation for creating the conditions necessary for disarmament to take place. The regime has been under tremendous stress in recent years as evidenced by the 1991 revelation of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons and uranium enrichment program after the first Gulf War; the discovery of the criminal network led by A.Q. Khan; North Korea's announced withdrawal from the NPT after violating the Treaty by violating its safeguards agreement and pursuing a nuclear weapons program; the failure of the UN Security Council and the international community to bring either North Korea or Iran into compliance with the NPT, and the IAEA's inability to identify the construction of a covert nuclear reactor in Syria.

It is important to acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of states that have joined the NPT are abiding by their treaty obligations. Unfortunately, a small number of states are not, and have pursued clandestine nuclear weapons programs in violation of their NPT obligations using their status as NPT parties to gain international assistance with their ostensibly peaceful nuclear programs.

Stemming proliferation requires that the international community work together to discourage and denounce such violations. As President Obama said in Prague, “*Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something.*” It is important that all nations stand together to renew and reinvigorate the regime. The Parties to the NPT have a particular responsibility for upholding that Treaty and enforcing the rules it prescribes.

NPT Parties also have a responsibility to support the IAEA, whose international nuclear safeguards regime verifies a party’s compliance with its nonproliferation obligations. Over the years, the Agency’s membership has adopted additional measures to enhance its ability to verify states’ compliance with NPT obligations in response to events that have exposed weaknesses in the safeguards system. Most recently, the IAEA has developed the Additional Protocol to enable the Agency to provide assurances about both declared and possibly undeclared activities. The United States ratified the Additional Protocol earlier this year and shares the view of the IAEA Director General El Baradei that adoption of the AP by all states is essential for the IAEA to be able to do its job.

It is not enough to detect violations. The costs of violating the treaty must outweigh the benefits. Noncompliance has to be addressed by imposing real consequences. The record in this area in the past has been poor, and it is imperative that the international community – both nuclear weapon and non-nuclear weapon states – summon the necessary political will to halt this dangerous problem.

We must also act to discourage abuse of the NPT's withdrawal provision. Parties have the right to withdraw from the Treaty, with a 3-month advance notice of withdrawal is provided to all other Parties and the UN Security Council, and this notice must include a statement of the extraordinary events that jeopardize its supreme interests. NPT Parties should consider how we can use this period of time to address the circumstances of a Party's withdrawal, as well as the impact of a withdrawal on the effective functioning of the international non-proliferation regime. In particular, the Parties should be prepared to consider steps to ensure that a state that withdraws after violating the NPT remains accountable for those violations. The parties to the NPT must be prepared to consider this important issue next May.

Peaceful Uses:

In addition to advancing disarmament and creating the conditions for this process to take place by restoring and strengthening the nonproliferation regime, the ongoing growth of peaceful uses of nuclear technologies must take place without creating further proliferation problems. For many years, nations have harnessed peaceful uses of the atom in energy generation, agriculture, medicine, mining and manufacturing. Nuclear science and technology are vitally important to the social and economic development of many countries. Strengthening this pillar of the NPT is more important than ever, especially when one considers the renewed interest in nuclear power as a response to climate change, energy security, and the promotion of sustainable development.

President Obama has called for a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, so that countries seeking nuclear power can access it more easily and cost effectively without the need to develop their own fuel production capabilities. As part of this framework, we are working to develop the concept of cradle-to-grave fuel services, so that countries can pursue nuclear power with an assured and affordable supply of nuclear fuel while minimizing the burdens of managing the nuclear fuel cycle. The goal is to respect countries rights to the peaceful use of nuclear energy while minimizing global proliferation risks.

Conclusion:

The United States is committed to leading by example on disarmament however we cannot do it alone. “As President Obama said in his address to the UN General Assembly *“We have sought -- in word and deed -- a new era of engagement with the world. And now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response...”*

Our greatest and most immediate opportunity is to take stewardship of our shared responsibilities with the upcoming 2010 Review Conference. A constructive Review Conference will require all States Parties to look beyond their differences to find those areas where they can agree now both on concrete measures to shore up the global regime, and on areas where further work and deliberation are needed for future steps to strengthen the regime. The United States is approaching the Review Conference as a serious opportunity to strengthen the Treaty and revalidate its indispensable contribution to regional and global stability and security. We sincerely hope others do the same.

