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## Opening Statement at the 2007 Session of the UN Disarmament Commission

**John A. Bravaco, U.S. Representative, U.S. Delegation**

New York City

April 9, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our Delegation congratulates you on your election as Chairman of the UN Disarmament Commission for the 2007 session.

Mr. Chairman, last year, after a number of years of disappointment and inactivity, the Disarmament Commission began to work again. It is now considering several important topics, and is charged with developing consensus recommendations on these matters by 2008. Of singular importance, nuclear nonproliferation is an express focus of the Commission's work for the first time.

Mr. Chairman, the drafting of consensus recommendations on these matters would be a difficult enterprise in the best of times, let alone at a time of heightened international tension brought about by Iran's defiance of the international community as it pursues a nuclear weapons capability in violation of its Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) obligations, as well as two unanimously adopted Chapter VII UN Security Council Resolutions.

Indeed, by unanimously adopting UNSCR 1747 on March 24th, the Security Council (UNSC) signaled the international community's resolve to take steps to make clear to the Iranian regime the costs of its failure to suspend enrichment related and reprocessing activities as required by UNSCR 1737. The Council's action was swift, occurring within weeks of the IAEA's February 22 report to the Council detailing Iran's continued non-compliance and non-cooperation with the IAEA. While the United States joins the entire Permanent membership of the Security Council in recognizing Iran's right to peaceful, civil nuclear energy under relevant articles of the NPT, this right comes with several responsibilities. Paramount among them is an obligation to forgo the pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. Iran's failure to comply with this basic obligation represents a grave threat to global nonproliferation and disarmament efforts.

Likewise, Iran's vice-chairmanship of this Commission threatens the credibility and efficacy of multilateral efforts to ensure global peace and security. When unanimously adopting UNSCRs 1737 and 1747, the Security Council acted on behalf of a concerned international community, and made clear that now is not the time for business as usual with the Iranian regime. Iran's noncompliance with its international nuclear obligations is well-documented.

Allowing Iran -- one of only 11 nations subject to UN Security Council Chapter VII sanctions -- to serve as Vice-Chair of a UN body charged with examining and making recommendations on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament is contradictory and inconsistent with the intent of the Security Council. Iran's presence on this Commission's Bureau undermines the integrity and credibility of the Disarmament Commission. By allowing Iran to serve as Vice-Chair of this Commission, we are undermining the UNDC's legitimacy and endangering our success.

Mr. Chairman, you assume your responsibilities at a time when the international community has expressed its grave concern regarding the threat to international security posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons. You face a heavy burden and distinct challenge to lead the Commission toward a productive way forward, to ensure that our work is not hijacked by the actions and policies of a country that defies the Security Council, and to lay the foundation for restoring the damaged image of this body. Indeed, while the United States remains committed to making this body an efficient and effective multilateral instrument -- one that remains relevant to 21st Century threats to international peace and security -- the result of this year's session will inform the United States' future deliberations about the role of the Commission, and the value of participating in these proceedings.

If we let this session pass without taking a hard look at the work we have already done, and assessing its real world chances for being assembled into a series of recommendations that all can agree to, then I fear that we will be setting the Commission up for an inevitable failure. In these endeavors, Mr. Chairman, your leadership will be key to the Commission's chances for future success.

Mr. Chairman, in lieu of circulating this statement, it will shortly be made available on the website of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

We wish you well as you guide our work, Mr. Chairman. I thank you, sir.

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