The United States Mission to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) of the United Nations and has the honor of submitting its response for views on resolution 71/76 entitled “Nuclear Disarmament Verification.”

The United States Mission to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

Mr. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs,

The Office of Disarmament Affairs,

United Nations Headquarters,

New York, New York 10017.
**U.S. Input to Verification GGE**

**Executive Summary**

In adopting Resolution 71/67, “Nuclear disarmament verification”, the General Assembly acknowledged an important truth about the importance of verification to agreements dealing with nuclear weapons. In order for States to have confidence in the agreements to which they are a party, it is absolutely essential that those States have the ability to verify other States’ compliance with such agreements.

This is not new; effective verification is a key feature of all successful nuclear reduction agreements. However, the requirements for verification will become increasingly demanding as the number of weapons decreases and those agreements become more complex and intrusive.

While the current global security situation does not appear likely to support further reductions of nuclear weapons in the near-term, States should not conclude that work on new and innovative verification measures is futile. The reality is quite the opposite. Without the pressure of on-going negotiations, experts have the ability to focus on the complex technical challenges associated with verifying further reductions, and can take the time needed to collectively address those challenges and identify potential solutions.
The earliest bilateral U.S.-Soviet arms control treaties limiting the growth of nuclear arsenals did not provide for any on-site inspection, although there was a requirement not to interfere with monitoring by national technical means. But with the entry into force of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the United States and Soviet Union required unprecedented access to each other’s most sensitive forces and facilities in order to verify compliance by each side.

Even today, under the New START, just fourteen lines of text in the Treaty are devoted to the central limits. What provides the parties with confidence, predictability, and stability are the processes and procedures that make up the more than 350 other pages of the Treaty. If the number of nuclear weapons decreases below the current global inventory, future arms control treaties and agreements will need to provide for new and even more intrusive inspection provisions, including access to new types of facilities and new items subject to inspection, such as the nuclear warheads themselves.

The key factor to enable the negotiation of further reductions in nuclear weapons is the global security situation. In the near term that security situation does not seem likely to enable such reductions. However, this does not mean that we should put thoughts of reductions and verification out of our mind. On the contrary now is the time, without the pressure of a negotiation, to contemplate what verification objectives and measures would be necessary to have confidence in the further reduction of global nuclear stockpiles. Now is the time to bring together experts from both nuclear possessor and non-possessor States, to build capacity and identify the challenges associated with verifying compliance with future commitments to nuclear weapon reductions. Now is the time to think through the complex solutions required to address those challenges, and begin the hard work of developing procedures and technologies that can implement those solutions.

Over the past decade, a number of important efforts have attempted to address the challenges of nuclear disarmament verification. The United States and the United Kingdom, the United Kingdom and Norway, and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV), among others, have all approached
the issue of verification from different angles. These efforts have collectively identified some key truths:

- Nuclear disarmament verification is complex work often requiring the involvement of people who often times cannot be allowed to see nuclear weapons and components directly.
- Collaborative work between possessor and non-possessor States is important to developing verification capacity and buy-in of States to verification methods.
- Exercises and practical demonstrations of technology aid in the development of that buy-in and advance the state of play.
- It takes engagement by governments to address and solve the verification challenges.

The Group of Government Experts established by Resolution 71/67 offers a forum for experts in the field of nuclear disarmament verification to incorporate these truths into a comprehensive framework that can guide future efforts like those cited above. It is easy for excitement to drive redundancy as competing groups of States, or even Non-Governmental Organizations rush to establish additional groups to “solve” the problems of verification. Too many competing efforts stretch the pool of experts thin, and dilute the work and energy that can be focused on those efforts already underway.

In this context, it is important that the Verification GGE identify on-going efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament verification research, and catalog the issues on which these groups are focused. In addition, and more importantly, the GGE can identify the gaps in verification research that are not yet being addressed. Such a gap analysis can serve as a guidepost for efficiently addressing outstanding needs and identifying areas for future research efforts.

The importance of verification in future nuclear disarmament efforts is paramount. The collective capacity of nations to address verification issues is increasing and will continue to increase through cooperative efforts like the IPNDV. The Verification GGE can play an important role in harnessing this ever-increasing capacity to push the boundaries of the state-of-the-art in advance of a day when the security situation improves enough to enable commitments to further reductions in nuclear weapons.