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Remarks

**OPENING REMARKS: CARNEGIE  
INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR POLICY  
CONFERENCE 2015**

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Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

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Good morning. Let me begin by congratulating Toby and his colleagues for putting together another extraordinary conference this year. It's no small feat to organize the year's wonkiest conference. But you all have it down to a science.

My only issue is with your timing. After all, the nuclear landscape seems eerily calm these days. It's not as if nuclear negotiations between long-time adversaries were reaching their moment of truth. Or that we were in the midst of a dangerous crisis involving the world's two biggest nuclear powers. Or that a rogue regime was testing nuclear weapons and threatening nuclear war.

The reality, as all of you know very well, is that all these things are happening as we speak. And they all underscore the fragility of the nonproliferation regime. But they are also a reminder of the regime's resilience. Our worst fears about the pace and scale of nuclear proliferation have not come to pass. The number of states actively participating in initiatives to strengthen nuclear security has never been higher. And the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty – for all its imperfections – has largely stood the test of time.

This is not just a product of chance and circumstance. It is the product of far-sighted leadership, courage, and imagination. As President Obama urged in Prague six years ago, we have to summon these same qualities today. We have to avoid the temptations of complacency and fatalism. And we have to reshape pro-actively the global nuclear order before unpredictable and uncontrollable events reshape it for us.

Over the next two days, we will cover nearly every dimension of the nuclear challenge. This morning, I would like to offer just a few introductory remarks about two of these dimensions – the crisis with Russia and Iran's nuclear program.

## **RUSSIA**

There is no question that Russia's aggression in Ukraine is a brazen violation of international law and Moscow's obligation to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its neighbors. No amount of Russian posturing can obscure that fact. Russia's annexation of Crimea, its intervention in eastern Ukraine, its threatening behavior against its neighbors, and its non-compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, pose the biggest threat to the vision of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace since the end of the Cold War. We have to be clear-eyed and honest about that undeniable and unfortunate reality.

But we also have to be clear-eyed about another undeniable reality. As vexing and threatening as Putin's Russia has become, it remains a consequential player, still a major producer of hydrocarbons, still a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and still the keeper of the world's largest nuclear arsenal.

I spent a good deal of my checkered diplomatic career helping Administrations of both parties navigate the complexities of the U.S.-Russia relationship. My hair is gray for a reason. I've lived through moments of great promise in that relationship, as well as periods of very sharp differences. Through it all, I've tried my best to keep focused on what's at stake for America's own interests.

In the coldest days of the Cold War, the United States and Russia worked together to lay the foundations of the global nuclear order. And in better days, we worked together to strengthen it, by creating communication and transparency measures to stabilize our relationship, reducing our weapons stockpiles, strengthening the IAEA safeguards regime, and preventing nuclear proliferation. The economic and human costs of the current crisis – for Russia, Ukraine, and Europe – are evident. But we cannot lose sight of the opportunity costs as well. Nowhere are these more vivid than in the nuclear arena. As the world's two largest nuclear powers, the United States and Russia should continue to have a shared sense of responsibility for safeguarding the nuclear order. We will both pay a price, and the wider cause of global nuclear order will be set back significantly, if we can't find a way to exercise that shared responsibility to help keep the world safe from nuclear dangers.

## **IRAN**

One of the most serious of those dangers, which continues to serve as a basis for solid U.S.-Russian cooperation, is the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program. We should have no illusions about Iran's ambitions or its conduct. It is important to embed our approach to the nuclear issue in a wider strategy, which continues to reassure our friends and push back against Iranian behavior threatening many parts of the Middle East, as well as the human rights of its own citizens. While all of these concerns are important and serious, the nuclear issue remains the most urgent, not only because of the way in which a nuclear-armed Iran would multiply exponentially all those concerns, but also because of the way in which it could unravel the nonproliferation regime.

Since his first day in office, President Obama has made very clear that he will do whatever it takes to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. He has also emphasized his determination to seek a strong negotiated resolution, which is the best of the alternatives before us. To get there, the Administration worked with Congress and international partners to build up leverage, principally through an unprecedented set of sanctions that have dramatically increased the pressures on Iran's economy and leadership. The diplomatic challenge is how to translate that leverage into a strong negotiated agreement that can guarantee the peaceful nature – and peaceful future – of Iran's nuclear program.

The elements of a good deal are pretty clear. A good deal will close off all the pathways Iran has to a nuclear weapon, whether it's through uranium or plutonium production. It will sharply constrain Iran's nuclear program for a long duration. It will set out intrusive monitoring, verification, and inspection procedures that go beyond the requirements of the Additional Protocol. And it will phase sanctions relief gradually, with credible snap-back provisions in the event of any violation of the agreement.

A good deal can credibly deter Iran from nuclear breakout. A good deal can give confidence to our friends and partners that violations will be detected quickly and addressed effectively. A good deal will be embedded within a broader regional strategy that will push back against threatening Iranian behavior. And a good deal can serve as a precedent for building a widely shared international consensus around what distinguishes purely peaceful nuclear programs from those with illegitimate military purposes.

## **FIREWALL**

Amidst the storm and stress of negotiations with Iran, it is easy to lose sight of the wider implications for the nonproliferation regime. This regime is not self-sustaining. It requires constant renewal and re-examination if it is to continue to serve as the backbone of the global nuclear order in the century unfolding before us.

The Iran case has exposed a number of potential vulnerabilities in the Treaty. The most significant, in my view, is the absence of a clear definition – a clear firewall – between civil and nuclear weapons programs. The gray zone between Article IV rights and Article II prohibitions on the “manufacture” of nuclear weapons is too wide, making it easier for proliferators to use the cover of nuclear energy programs to pursue nuclear weapons.

As nuclear technology and know-how become more diffuse and as states turn to nuclear power to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, building this firewall between military and peaceful activities is becoming an increasingly urgent task – the kind of task that demands the foresight and imagination that our leaders demonstrated at earlier moments of testing for the nonproliferation regime. Building a nuclear firewall is obviously much easier said than done. While many states might agree that peaceful nuclear programs should not conduct nuclear tests, enrich uranium beyond 20%, or develop computer codes for modelling what happens when plutonium is compressed by high explosives, others worry that a firewall might limit basic and legitimate research and development or conventional military applications.

Both nuclear-weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states have a role to play in defining this firewall. Non-nuclear weapons states will likely need to foreswear some particularly sensitive activities and provide greater transparency and confidence-building measures around others. And nuclear weapons states will need to sharpen the distinction in their own nuclear programs, by making available for IAEA safeguards all civilian nuclear facilities, and over time ceasing practices that blur the line, such as the use of highly enriched uranium for naval nuclear propulsion. It’s a tall task, but it shouldn’t be impossible.

## **CONCLUSION**

The nuclear landscape may be everything but calm these days. But we’ve overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the past. And I remain hopeful that we can do so again today. This will require brainpower, leadership, and daring – three qualities that this morning’s keynote speaker has in abundance. We are very fortunate that Secretary Moniz has brought his Fall River toughness and MIT smarts to Washington – a city that could use more of each. And we are especially fortunate that he has agreed to join us this morning. So it is my great privilege to introduce a remarkable colleague, and a remarkable public servant, U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernie Moniz.

Thank you very much.