

A P-5 Nuclear Dialogue

Concept, Building Blocks,
and Implementation

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Overview

In April, 2009, President Barack Obama affirmed “America’s intention to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” and stated his intention to organize a “Global Summit on Nuclear Security” within the coming year. Less than a month earlier, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called on the five nuclear-weapon states recognized by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), or the so-called P-5 countries, to play a leadership role in implementing the NPT’s Article VI obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Brown’s statement was preceded by other UK initiatives, including a proposal that the P-5 jointly explore the technical issues related to the abolition of nuclear weapons. Still earlier, in March, 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy called for the P-5 to agree on nuclear transparency measures. All of these statements take place against the backdrop of ongoing discussions among the P-5 on preparations for the 2010 NPT Review Conference as well as unprecedented global attention to the goal of nuclear abolition.

The current moment in international affairs is characterized by a high degree of both nuclear anxiety and nuclear hope, particularly (but not exclusively) among the world’s many non-nuclear countries. Nuclear anxiety reflects concern about the spread of nuclear capability to states and non-state actors, uncertainties (including among the P-5) about the policies and postures of today’s nuclear powers, questions on the part of the non-nuclear states about the commitment of the nuclear states to the NPT’s Article VI goal, and concern among a few U.S. allies that renewed emphasis on disarmament could weaken extended deterrence. At the same time, the endorsement in January, 2007 of the goal of nuclear abolition not simply by traditional proponents of nuclear disarmament but by prominent senior American statesmen, has reopened the fundamentals of the nuclear debate in the United States and newly legitimized discussion of nuclear disarmament. Around the world, President Obama’s reaffirmation of the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons has created great expectations of new momentum and progress toward achieving “global zero.”

With these developments in mind, this paper explores the concept of a P-5 nuclear dialogue that would focus on issues of nuclear security, nuclear stability, and nuclear disarmament. It describes the basic elements of such a dialogue, discusses its potential payoffs and risks, suggests ways to mitigate risk, and outlines possible next steps. A more detailed appendix considers some specific issues likely to arise in crafting an approach for a P-5 nuclear dialogue, while illustrating some of the more specific ideas that could be put forward by U.S. officials.

The paper puts forward the idea of a broadened P-5 nuclear dialogue and encourages debate about whether and how such a dialogue might be pursued. Our own conclusion can be set out up front: the time may well be ripe for a more far-reaching P-5 nuclear engagement initiative.

The Elements of a P-5 Nuclear Dialogue

A P-5 nuclear dialogue would build on but broaden the periodic dialogue on non-proliferation issues among the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China. It also would build on the British proposal for P-5 discussions on the technical aspects of abolition and the French proposal to develop transparency measures. We envision a broader P-5 nuclear dialogue organized around the following five elements:

- respective visions of a safe and secure global nuclear future;
- basic principles to guide nuclear decisions and interactions
- pursuing an agreed set of incremental but progressive undertakings to strengthen nuclear security and nuclear stability, and accelerate progress toward the NPT's goal of nuclear disarmament;
- periodic statements by the P-5 to make public the results of the preceding dialogue; and
- an agenda for continuing dialogue.

Following are initial thoughts on these five elements.

Vision of the Nuclear Future. The starting point for a broader P-5 nuclear dialogue would be an exchange of views on respective visions of a nuclear future that can be characterized as safe, secure, and stable. In part, this exchange would focus on defining desired directions in P-5 strategic interaction and cooperation. In part, it would focus importantly on goals and challenges for preventing further proliferation. And in part, it would seek common ground on the goal of safe and secure stewardship of nuclear weapons, how best to affirm support for NPT disarmament goals, possible “way stations” on the path toward disarmament, and the place of non-NPT nuclear states in a desirable nuclear future. Given concerns expressed by Russia and China, it may be important, as well, to address how conventional forces should be considered in defining a stable nuclear future.

Basic Principles. The P-5 dialogue would then focus on a discussion of guiding principles for security engagement and constructive interaction on nuclear matters designed to advance the common future vision. Different P-5 states would put forward their preferred principles – and seek the reaction of the others. Such principles could be more or less ambitious, but would seek to address issues such as the character of nuclear forces and doctrine; the role of offenses and defenses; possibilities for enhancing security, stability and transparency; reassurance of non-nuclear states, and cooperation in short- and long-term risk reduction efforts.

Specific Undertakings. Building on the discussion of vision and principles, a P-5 dialogue then could take up areas for cooperative or at least complementary action. Specific undertakings might be explored in two broad baskets: (i) those designed to enhance global nuclear security, stability, and transparency; and (ii) those directly linked to the goal of nuclear abolition. The first basket

could include actions in any of the following areas: promoting responsible nuclear stewardship, enhancing the security of nuclear materials worldwide, reducing other sources of nuclear risk, fostering non-adversarial strategic relationships, and joint approaches to specific emerging technical challenges (such as verifying arms control limits on nuclear warheads). The second basket would consider additional interim steps toward nuclear disarmament – as well as longer-term follow-on actions – that could be packaged as a P-5 Action Plan for Nuclear Disarmament.

Products. The results of a broadened P-5 nuclear dialogue could be set out in agreed statements, comparable to both the P-5 NPT statements and G-8 Summit statements. An incremental process is envisioned: those statements could begin more modestly and grow in scope over time, as conditions ripen and as there is greater consensus on specific elements and actions. If feasible, it would be desirable for the P-5 to issue a statement prior to the 2010 Review Conference that would address not only non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, but also the fuller set of nuclear security and disarmament issues. Such a statement could address initial areas of agreement across vision, principles, and undertakings.

An Agenda to Build Cooperation. Finally, the P-5 dialogue would seek to gain early agreement on establishing a regular and continuing process of exchanges on nuclear issues. Officials could meet every six months, with working groups on specific topics in the interim. To facilitate the process, the P-5 also could agree on an initial agenda – to be periodically revised – that would reflect their respective views on priority areas for further exploration and, where possible, action.

Payoffs and Risks

Payoffs. The proposal for a broadened P-5 nuclear dialogue should be seen in the context of emerging new directions in U.S. strategies for nonproliferation, threat reduction, major power cooperation, and nuclear disarmament. The timing is right to consider initiatives that can signal further a renewed American readiness to articulate and pursue a cooperative vision of a desirable and stable global nuclear order over the longer-term. The lack of any such vision was an important gap in recent U.S. strategic policies. It also made it considerably more difficult to shape constructively the debate about implementation of Article VI obligations, thereby undermining U.S. non-proliferation efforts. In turn, pursuing a P-5 nuclear dialogue as part of a broader strategy to shape the nuclear future – one that envisions a reduced role for nuclear weapons in U.S. security – could help to forge a stronger domestic political consensus on near-term directions for U.S. nuclear policy and capabilities.

The more specific international security payoffs of a P-5 dialogue would clearly depend on how far the P-5 governments are willing to go in making concrete commitments – and how soon. Here, an important measure of success would be tangible benefits in terms of risk reduction, greater predictability and reduced uncertainties in their own nuclear interactions, and more active cooperation. Particularly *vis-à-vis* China and Russia, it could be easier to pursue new transparency measures in a P-5 context linked to the NPT than on a bilateral basis. At least this proposition is worth testing.

In addition, a P-5 nuclear dialogue could be an important means to address the concerns of many non-nuclear NPT parties that the P-5 do not take seriously their Article VI obligations. At the least, such a dialogue likely would be welcomed as a step toward new P-5 actions to meet these obligations. Its payoffs would be greatest were the P-5 able to identify and act upon specific steps toward Article VI goals. The potential exists, therefore, for this P-5 dialogue to strengthen support among non-nuclear states for non-proliferation norms and actions at a crucial time. One result of a greater U.S. readiness to show flexibility on nuclear disarmament issues could well be a greater readiness by these states to support non-proliferation objectives and actions of concern to Washington. Senior diplomats abroad have so stated.

A P-5 dialogue also would provide a means to extend discussion of nuclear arms reductions and disarmament actions beyond the U.S.-Russian bilateral framework. It could be a vehicle for beginning a collective discussion on the issues likely to emerge following successful conclusion by the United States and Russia of a START replacement treaty (assuming this in fact occurs) – a discussion that may well need to consider explicitly the capabilities of nuclear states outside the P-5 (e.g., India).

It is quite possible that only a limited degree of agreement among the P-5 would prove possible at first. Still, a process of genuine engagement would be a step forward even if it did not lead quickly to many agreed actions. It would provide additional windows into the thinking of other P-5 countries as well as continue the process of building habits of cooperation on strategic issues. Such cooperation among the P-5 is essential to deal effectively with virtually all of today's proliferation-related challenges, both state and non-state.

Risks. Perhaps the most important risk, as already suggested, is that differences among the P-5 on some substantive issues will result in more contention than cooperation and enhanced mutual understanding. Consider three hypothetical but plausible possibilities: (i) France might well find it difficult to reaffirm the NPT vision of a world in which nuclear weapons are abolished; (ii) China will be reluctant to endorse a principle related to greater transparency intended to reduce uncertainties and enhance predictability – particularly while the broader U.S.-China strategic relationship remains ambiguous or unresolved; and (iii) Russia may find it difficult to agree to an undertaking to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in national security strategies. However, these differences will not disappear on their own and will actually become more pronounced if left unaddressed as global pressures grow for P-5 movement toward nuclear disarmament. Thus, they should not be viewed as immovable impediments to initiating a P-5 nuclear dialogue – though in the end Russia and China may determine that they prefer to address some issues at the bilateral level. Certainly, productive bilateral fora should continue even as opportunities to complement them are explored.

More broadly, different attitudes toward the very concept of enhanced P-5 cooperation could constrain this process. Both China and Russia may prefer bilateral dealings with the United States; both France and the United Kingdom may prefer trilateral dealings. That said, the precedent

of P-5 cooperation exists in the NPT context – and on non-proliferation among the P-4 in the G-8 forum.

Certainly, if the process resulted in prolonged contention, the result could be to add to, rather than alleviate today's nuclear anxiety among non-nuclear states, while failing to meet their expectations for a reinvigorated process toward enhancing nuclear security and advancing nuclear disarmament. It is also possible that the dynamics of P-5 discussions could create pressure on Washington to compromise U.S. positions and interests. The magnitude of this risk, however, is likely to be tightly linked to the effectiveness of the U.S. participants in such discussions and to the degree that all participants speak for – and are clearly seen to speak for – the highest levels in their government.

Addressing Risks and Constraints. There may be ways to address such risks and constraints. Early agreement among the P-5 that the dialogue would be an incremental undertaking – in effect, an unfolding process rather than a single-time outcome – could help significantly by providing a framework that built over time on areas of convergence. Thus, while beginning with a comprehensive agenda for discussions, the ensuing efforts by the P-5 to reach agreements could focus initially only on the most promising areas.

Both as a group and individually, moreover, the P-5 have incentives to pursue a broadened nuclear dialogue. In particular, the P-5 share interests – from strengthening international support for the NPT to lessening nuclear uncertainties among them, from ensuring responsible nuclear stewardship to engaging the N-3 countries – that would be served by enhanced cooperation even as there remain areas of disagreement and even contention. Prospects for gaining agreement among the P-5 could be enhanced by depicting the dialogue on nuclear weapons and disarmament as a valuable extension of the existing P-5 NPT-related dialogue on non-proliferation.

Timing may also be important. The readiness of Russia to take this next step may grow now that bilateral nuclear negotiations have resumed. In turn, the prospect of enhanced bilateral dialogue with China could make it easier for China to participate in this type of broadened P-5 nuclear dialogue. For all of the P-5, the announcement of such an initiative to enhance their dialogue and cooperation could be an appropriate follow-on to the Third Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2010 NPT PrepCom.

Most important, all of the P-5 capitals could realize benefits from a sustained dialogue of the kind envisioned. Working within a P-5 context could prove useful to the United States and China in making progress on strategic issues with the goal of reducing the risk of miscalculation or competition between the two countries. For Russia, reaffirming its role as a global “heavyweight” – but in a more cooperative forum – could have important appeal psychologically. More practically, both Russia and China could see an opportunity to learn more about – and possibly influence the modalities of – U.S. missile defense and non-nuclear global strike efforts; this could be an important incentive. As for the United Kingdom and France, both of them have already proposed enhanced

P-5 cooperation, though not in this precise format. Both Paris and London also would gain from being perceived as playing a global leadership role on nuclear issues.

Timing and Next Steps

One purpose of a P-5 nuclear dialogue would be to reinforce U.S. non-proliferation efforts, including by reaffirming and demonstrating commitment to the NPT's Article VI goal. This would argue for initiating such a dialogue and seeking an initial agreed statement prior to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Given this, one possible first step would be to explore the concept informally with London and Paris – whether bi-laterally or trilaterally. This broadened dialogue could be proposed as an extension of the P-5 non-proliferation dialogue and as a complement to the UK-proposed technical discussions on nuclear abolition. Assuming interest on the part of the UK and France, the next step would be to engage Russia and China. To set the stage for exchanges and a useful product prior to the 2010 Review Conference, it would be necessary to initiate these consultations by Summer-Fall, 2009.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out in this short concept paper, there could be considerable payoff in establishing a broadened P-5 nuclear dialogue. The dialogue would be designed to complement – not compete with or subsume – effective ongoing (or prospective) bilateral processes on issues related to nuclear security, stability, transparency and disarmament. At a minimum, the dialogue would provide a vehicle for testing the degree to which there is convergence among the P-5 on these issues, and if so, for constructing a set of cooperative actions to advance more specific objectives. The dialogue could also help to strengthen U.S. non-proliferation diplomacy. Finally, with its nuclear disarmament dimension, the dialogue would be a dramatic way for the five NPT nuclear weapon states to demonstrate that they take seriously their Article VI obligations as the 2010 NPT Review Conference approaches. Thus, the time may be ripe for a more far-reaching P-5 nuclear engagement initiative. At the least, it is worth testing this proposition.

Appendix

P-5 Nuclear Dialogue – Issues and Options

This appendix addresses a number of issues that would arise were the P-5 countries to exchange views on the proposed substantive elements described broadly above: vision, principles, and undertakings. In addition, to illustrate some of the more specific ideas that could be pursued within a P-5 dialogue, this appendix also sets out some illustrative options for talking points for each of those elements. As such, this appendix’s discussion of issues and options should help to “flesh out” the basic concept of a P-5 nuclear dialogue.

Vision

Issues

How to characterize the goals for strategic interaction and cooperation among the P-5 – as part of a stable future nuclear order – would be an initial issue. This would be especially so among the United States and Russia, the United States and China, and the United States, Russia, and China in an increasingly triangular relationship. In particular, how do these governments view the role of nuclear weapons in their strategic relationships? The role of missile defenses? Is the concept of “non-adversarial strategic relationships” a sound objective? At a more practical level, what standards of responsible nuclear stewardship are all of the P-5 countries prepared to acknowledge in terms of the safety, security, command and control, and other dimensions of their nuclear postures?

Any P-5 exchanges on “vision” also would need to address the goal of the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons. The P-5’s readiness collectively to affirm this goal would be welcomed by virtually all of the non-nuclear weapon states and could have significant nonproliferation benefits if seen as part of a concerted effort to “lean forward” on the disarmament question.

Illustrative Talking Points

- In the view of the United States, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – share a special responsibility to help achieve the Charter’s goal of a secure, stable, and peaceful future world order. In pursuit of that goal, we, the P-5 countries, already are cooperating to meet today’s non-proliferation and nuclear terrorism dangers. We have periodically issued joint statements on both these challenges. We should build on our past cooperation to strengthen joint action moving forward – among ourselves and with other states – to address today’s nuclear weapon challenges and to accelerate progress toward nuclear disarmament.

- We believe that we should be able to agree on a number of common goals: strengthening today’s non-proliferation regime and stopping further nuclear proliferation; ending competition in nuclear weapons and creating non-adversarial strategic relationships among all nuclear powers; preventing the acquisition and use of nuclear weapons by terrorists; and ensuring that all nations can realize the promise of safe and peaceful nuclear energy while minimizing proliferation risks.

- We all have committed ourselves to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As we approach the 2010 NPT Review Conference, we should reaffirm that pledge as well as our readiness to pursue a process of ongoing steps toward the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. These steps should include actions to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in our national security strategies and put in place the building blocks of nuclear disarmament (including enhanced transparency) and entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty).
- To the degree possible, we believe it would be valuable to put forward our own “Plan of Action” on nuclear disarmament. It would include our joint vision of a stable nuclear future as well as specific near-term steps that we would all pledge to take.

Principles

Issues

The respective national policies of different P-5 countries (including the United States) will set limits on what types of shared principles could be agreed among the P-5 – and then conceivably articulated publicly as part of overall non-proliferation diplomacy. From an American perspective, it probably is desirable to think in terms of two different sets of principles that might be put forward for discussion in a P-5 dialogue, one set more forward-leaning than the other.

A baseline set of principles could be relatively straightforward, in effect comprising principles or guidelines for actions on which the prospects for P-5 agreement would be relatively assured. Such principles might emphasize the following: the responsibility of the P-5 and other countries to deal with pressing nuclear challenges; addressing misperceptions and concerns with respect to U.S. and other national policies; the importance of seizing the “high ground” and shaping the abolition debate in a constructive manner.

A more “forward-leaning” set of principles would seek to press Russia and China in areas in which they have so far been more reluctant to engage – for instance, greater nuclear transparency and reducing the salience of nuclear weapons. In this second set of principles, it could be desirable to include a principle that would affirm that none of the P-5 would seek to negate the deterrent capability of another – whether via offense, defense, or some combination. Such a principle would indirectly acknowledge the legitimacy of deterrence. At the same time, it would address perceptions in both China and Russia that the United States is seeking, ultimately, to eliminate their deterrent capability and otherwise “escape from the balance of power.”¹

¹ However, the United States has yet to resolve whether it should be prepared to accept some measure of nuclear vulnerability to China and, conversely, whether some such vulnerability is unavoidable because of China’s readiness to invest whatever resources are necessary to achieve and sustain a secure second strike capability.

Principles addressing nuclear abolition could be crafted for both the baseline and the more forward-leaning approach. Here, while France is likely to take a cautious approach, China and perhaps the UK could well press for a more robust principle to reflect P-5 thinking on nuclear abolition.

How to handle the so-called “13 Steps” agreed as part of the 2000 NPT Review Conference would be yet another issue. The “13 Steps” retain strong support among the NPT’s non-nuclear weapon states. With the change of U.S. administrations, many of the steps also are much more consistent with the thrust of U.S. nuclear policy as it appears to be emerging. These steps have come to be part of the “living history,” so to speak, of the NPT and, as appropriate, could be drawn on by any one of the P-5 countries in setting out principles for their nuclear interaction or for more specific actions to be taken.

Illustrative Talking Points

Baseline Points:

- In making decisions about our strategic capabilities (both offensive and defensive) and in cooperating to address today’s nuclear challenges, the United States believes there are a number of basic principles the P-5 should follow. We think of these as *baseline principles* – and look forward to hearing others’ views.
- In particular, while all nations have the right to deter and defend against threats to their security, we believe that strategic policies should be guided by a mutual respect for each other’s interests, concerns, and perspectives. We should seek to build on areas of agreement among us while narrowing areas of disagreement.
- We should be able to agree that the security of all nations depends vitally on cooperative actions to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, minimize the risk of use of nuclear weapons by a state or a terrorist group, and address the factors in regional and global security that contribute to proliferation.
- Equally important, given the worldwide repercussions of any use of nuclear weapons, we, the recognized nuclear weapon states, have a special responsibility to act to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again, and to work together to respond to developments that could pose a nuclear threat to us and to other countries. This includes further cooperation against nuclear terrorism.
- In addition, we believe that our respective decisions on nuclear weapons and doctrine should be shaped by our obligations under Article VI of the NPT, including the unequivocal commitment to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons that we affirmed together at the 2000 NPT Review Conference as part of the 13 Steps.

More “Forward-Leaning” Points:

- To the extent that nuclear deterrence remains an element of our military postures – explicitly or implicitly – we should agree to avoid actions that would undermine the deterrence

posture of others among us, bearing in mind our security commitments to allies and the possibility that there will be differences among us in the assessment of security threats.

- With that in mind, we believe that enhanced mutual predictability and reassurance with regard to strategic intentions and capabilities can minimize uncertainties and the prospects for nuclear competition, avoid potentially dangerous misunderstandings or miscalculation, and build confidence and trust. We also believe that we should begin to explore additional transparency measures that might be acceptable to all of us.

- As long as we possess nuclear weapons, we each must maintain the most rigorous and responsible safety, security, control, and stewardship practices. We must also encourage the non-NPT nuclear states to pursue such practices. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that all nuclear materials globally are secure.

- We believe that among our common goals should be to reach agreement on a nuclear disarmament “action plan” that provides our shared vision of the nuclear future and identifies practical and realistic steps toward the Article VI goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. Consistent with such a plan, reinvigorated unilateral and multilateral steps are required to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons in a manner consistent with national security and nuclear stability.

Undertakings

Issues

There are many specific actions and undertakings that could be proposed as part of a P-5 dialogue. Other P-5 governments can be expected to table their own proposals and even their own versions of undertakings on which there is likely to be relative consensus from the start. Some proposals are likely to be readily acceptable to all of the P-5; other proposals are likely to be more controversial and difficult for at least some governments to accept in full.

Tactically, it would be necessary to decide whether to put forward at the outset a comprehensive set of undertakings for deliberation by the P-5 or only a handful. The former approach would better define an overall ongoing dialogue; the latter approach could achieve holds greater promise for achieving quick agreement on items for which there is strong consensus and thereby creating a precedent of cooperation. A middle ground would be to put forward many ideas initially but also to propose that the dialogue focus quickly on those areas on which agreement is most readily achieved.

The following illustrative talking points put forward a more comprehensive set of undertakings that could be proposed. It places these proposals in three baskets: steps to enhance global nuclear stability; steps to enhance global nuclear weapons and materials security; and steps toward the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Illustrative Talking Points:

- We shall set out many ideas. But one approach would be to concentrate our dialogue on seeking agreement on a discrete set of actions that we could undertake or commit to

undertake prior to the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We could draw from a more comprehensive set of possible actions, such as those set out here, as well as other ideas to be put forward by our P-5 partners. Over time, we could agree on further undertakings. The following is not meant to be all-inclusive. We welcome other suggestions on actions to take – and reactions to any or all of these ideas.

Steps to Enhance Global Nuclear Stability

- In the Cold War era, a number of initiatives were taken to enhance nuclear stability. Ensuring global nuclear stability going forward can build on past successful efforts and should encompass actions by all of today's nuclear weapon states. P-5 confidence-building actions can be an important complement to other bilateral and multilateral undertakings.

- We believe that continued progress by the United States and Russia in reducing Cold War-era nuclear arsenals would be an important step toward this goal. We also welcome the readiness of France and the United Kingdom to freeze existing forces at already low levels. We believe all states should exercise restraint in modernizing their existing nuclear forces.

- Ultimately, restraints on missile defenses will need to complement further reductions and restraint on offenses. Missile defenses should be deployed in a manner and scope consistent with regional and global stability, supplemented as needed by appropriate confidence building measures. We believe that it is important to consider ways to pursue cooperative missile defense capabilities to protect against common threats. We are open to other countries' ideas on how to manage cooperatively future offense-defense relationships among us.

- We should begin to explore concepts and approaches that would allow each of us to maintain the lowest possible alert levels for our nuclear forces consistent with operational and security requirements. In particular, we believe that each of us should avoid a Launch on Warning posture.

- We should examine additional confidence-building steps to enhance mutual understanding, avoid miscalculation, and limit potentially provocative practices. This should include transparency measures related to our respective strategic forces, doctrines, and plans; joint assessments of future threats; and personnel liaison arrangements.

- In our view, we should be seeking ways in which the P-5 can jointly engage with the non-NPT nuclear powers to lessen the risk that strategic miscalculation, loss of control, or accident could trigger nuclear escalation in a regional crisis.

Steps to Enhance Global Nuclear Weapons and Materials Security

- We propose to identify additional steps that can be taken by the P-5 and with the non-NPT nuclear powers to maintain the most rigorous possible technical and operational standards and practices to ensure the safety, security, and control of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons materials.

- The sharing of best practices is one approach. Another is for the entire P-5 to join in President Obama's initiative to secure nuclear materials globally in the next four years. Yet

another is to develop a joint program to help countries strengthen their nuclear materials controls as required by UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

Steps to Build a Practicable Plan of Action for Nuclear Disarmament

- Recognizing our unique shared responsibilities and consistent with reaffirming our commitment to the goal eliminating nuclear weapons, the P-5 should take more specific actions to advance that goal.
- These actions could form, in our view, part of a P-5 Plan of Action for Nuclear Disarmament that identifies the conditions, building blocks, interim steps, and processes of moving further toward the goal of nuclear abolition. We believe we should strive to reach agreement on such a plan prior to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.
- Even as the concept of an Action Plan is developed, we believe there are some specific actions that could be taken now. These include:
 - Reaffirm our intention to abide by the nuclear test moratorium while working to facilitate entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. For our part, the United States has already made clear its intention to seek ratification of the CTBT as soon as practicable. We hope that China will do so, as well.
 - Now that agreement has been reached in the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on an effectively verifiable Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, we all should commit ourselves to achieving an agreement. This would be widely welcomed by many NPT parties.
 - Cooperate more closely in the areas of non-proliferation and counter-terrorism, thereby helping to advance the political and security conditions necessary for eliminating nuclear weapons.
 - Initiate a dialogue with the non-NPT nuclear states. One purpose would be to encourage nuclear restraint and explore how best to integrate these states into a wider nuclear disarmament process. Another would be to better understand their security concerns so that we can proceed in a manner that does not heighten those concerns.