

Statement of Laura Kennedy  
Nominee for  
U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
December 1, 2009

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.

It is a great honor to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to be the U.S. Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, or CD, in Geneva. I am also grateful to Secretary Clinton and Under Secretary Tauscher for their confidence in me and for giving me this new opportunity for service in support of our nation. As always, I thank my husband, John Feeney, and our sons Martin and Patrick for their support.

This is an extraordinarily challenging time to deal with nonproliferation and arms control. Over the years, the international community, including the CD, has designed a number of vital treaties and norms to deal with threats to peace and security - but the imperative to support and improve regimes that protect our safety and promote collective security is sharper than ever. As President Obama said in Prague, "the U.S. cannot succeed in this endeavor alone but we can lead it."

A key contribution to a strengthened security architecture would be for the CD to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, or FMCT, to verifiably end the production of what President Obama called the "building blocks" required to produce a nuclear weapon. If confirmed, this would be my major goal at the CD, the world's sole standing negotiating forum for multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements. As described by Secretary Clinton, a universal FMCT could cap the size of existing nuclear arsenals and reduce the risk that terrorist groups could gain access to stockpiles of fissile materials.

The goal of an FMCT has eluded the CD for more than a decade, even though the CD and its predecessors negotiated such landmark treaties as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons

Convention, and limits on nuclear testing. This year, however, the CD reached a break-through. Members agreed on a balanced program of work, which provided for the start of FMCT negotiations as well as substantive discussions on other elements of the CD's agenda, including nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and negative security assurances. These are significant issues for the U.S. as underscored by the Administration's commissioning of major policy reviews of Space and Nuclear posture as well as the interagency study of the core issues of how an FMCT should be designed and effectively verified. While we believe that only the FMCT is ripe for negotiation in this forum, the CD provides an important forum for the U.S. to advocate its views, to listen to those of its fellow members of the international community, and to engage vigorously on some of the most demanding issues of our time.

Because the CD includes sixty-five independent states and operates by consensus, it is a major challenge for that body to keep a unified focus on goals which touch on the varied national security interests of the constituent members and the international community. If confirmed, I will apply my three decades of experience in the diplomatic and national security arena to this challenge and helping to ensure that the United States exercises its indispensable leadership in this forum while appropriately and robustly safeguarding its own national security interests. To quote the President again, "as long as (nuclear) weapons exist, we will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter any adversary and guarantee that defense to our allies."

If confirmed, I will plan to consult closely with this distinguished committee as well as other members of Congress and their staffs. Thank you and I look forward to any questions you may have.