US POLICIES BELIE CLAIMS OF ARTICLE VI COMPLIANCE

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The story being presented by the US delegation to this NPT Review Conference to increase the pace of dismantling old warheads by 20% was immediately attacked by the congressional majority and is now essentially dead. In response to Kerry’s promise, language was added to the annual military authorization bill to limit dismantlement spending to about the current level—which was also the administration’s requested amount, raising the question of how Secretary Kerry’s promise was to be paid for in the first place.1

Thus at the moment there is unanimity within the US government against any pursuit of “negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament,” as required by NPT Article VI. Congress has even repeatedly passed (and this President has signed) laws of dubious constitutionality restricting the President’s authority to negotiate further disarmament.4

Deploying, sustaining, and modernizing the huge US nuclear arsenal will cost at least one trillion dollars through the early 2030s, a huge expense even for the US and a commitment that demonstrates the perfect vacuum of sincerity in US disarmament promises. Nuclear weapons are now, and are slated to remain, central in US security policy. As former Obama White House nuclear czar Gary Samore recently said, “Nuclear disarmament is not going to happen…. It’s a fantasy. We need our weapons for our safety, and we’re not going to give them up.”5

And that’s the way things will remain unless the non-nuclear-armed states decide, on their own, to fill the legal gap that lends legitimacy to nuclear weapons and prestige to the states that possess them, with a treaty banning the production, possession, sharing, and use of nuclear weapons. Such a ban would be an “effective measure” to end the nuclear arms race and bring about nuclear disarmament, as envisioned by article VI.6

