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U.S. Senator for Indiana

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Opening Statement for Hearing on the New START Treaty

U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Dick Lugar made the following statement at today's hearing.

I join the Chairman in welcoming our esteemed witness, former Secretary of State James Baker. Yesterday, the Foreign Relations Committee was briefed on the New START Treaty by Secretaries Gates and Clinton and Admiral Mullen. Today, we will benefit from the perspective of an architect of the original START agreement.

As President George H.W. Bush's Secretary of State, Jim Baker testified on the START Treaty before the Foreign Relations Committee on June 23, 1992. At that time, he was heavily engaged, not only in bringing the Treaty to fruition, but also in transitioning our relationship with Russia from Cold War antagonism to a more open post-Cold War dynamic. Much has changed in the intervening eighteen years, but most of the basic strategic concerns that motivated the Reagan and Bush Administrations to pursue nuclear arms control with Moscow in the 1980s and early 1990s still exist today.

We are seeking mutual reductions in nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles that contribute to stability and reduce the costs of maintaining the weapons. We are pursuing transparency of our nuclear arsenals, backed up by strong verification measures and formal consultation methods. We are attempting to maximize the safety of our nuclear arsenals and encourage global cooperation toward non-proliferation goals. And we are hoping to solidify U.S.-Russian cooperation on nuclear security matters, while sustaining our knowledge of Russian nuclear capabilities and intentions.

The Reagan-Bush arms control strategy led to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the START Treaties. These agreements shifted the goal of nuclear arms control from limiting weapons build-ups to making substantial, verifiable cuts in existing arsenals. These treaties and their successors have made us safer. They have greatly reduced the amount of weaponry threatening the United States and have served as a powerful statement of the intent of the United States to curtail the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

They also helped open the Russian military and defense establishments, facilitated relationships between American and Russian officials, and provided mechanisms promoting predictability and regularized consultations. This remains a fundamental tenant of the New START Treaty, which contains nearly all of the confidence-building measures first initiated in treaties negotiated and signed by Presidents Reagan and Bush.

We know, however, that bilateral treaties are not neat instruments, because they involve merging the will of two nations with distinct and often conflicting interests. Treaties come with inherent imperfections and questions. As Secretary Gates testified yesterday, even successful agreements routinely are accompanied by differences of opinion by the parties. The ratification process, therefore, is intended to consider whether limits on strategic forces and verification procedures are fully consistent with U.S. national security.

Having served as White House Chief of Staff, Secretary of the Treasury, and Secretary of State during the Reagan and Bush years, our witness is in a unique position to offer insights about the historical legacy of START, as it pertains to the context of the New START Treaty. I also look forward to his perspectives on our relationship with Moscow and the broader geopolitical impact of the START agreements. How important is the New START Treaty to our long-term relationship with Moscow, and does it advance strategic goals beyond Russia?

I thank the Chair and look forward to our discussion.

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