

(Remarks as Prepared)
Opening Remarks
The Hon. Christopher A. Ford, Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation
2019 GICNT Plenary Meeting
Buenos Aires, Argentina
June 6, 2019

Esteemed delegates, I welcome you all to the 11th Plenary Meeting of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. I would like to thank the Government of Argentina for organizing and hosting this important event. We are honored by the presence of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship Jorge Faurie. Minister, I thank you for your remarks, and thank you to Ambassador Roberto García Moritán for your warm welcome. Argentina has demonstrated a strong commitment to nuclear security, and has been an important partner of the GICNT having hosted two bilateral tabletop exercises since 2014 and serving as the Response and Mitigation Working Group Chair since 2017. I look forward to Undersecretary Julián Gadano's keynote address.

Since its inception in 2006, the GICNT has grown from partnership of 13 nations to a vast network of 88 nations and 6 official observer organizations committed to working together to strengthen global capacity in the fight against terrorism. In its 13 years of existence, the GICNT has added unique value to the global nuclear security architecture by identifying and promoting practical nuclear security best practices that can be applied and institutionalized within your governments. The GICNT keeps getting stronger each year. It is a foundational element of the "new normal" for how we collectively think about nuclear security. The highest levels of the United States Government share this view. I will now read [a message](#) from President Trump.

This 11th Plenary Meeting provides us with an opportunity to review progress made in implementing the principles of the GICNT since the 2017 Plenary in Tokyo, Japan.

I would like to recognize the contributions of Finland in leading our efforts over the past two years as Implementation and Assessment Group Coordinator. In particular, Ambassador Jari

Luoto has shown exceptional personal dedication to advancing the GICNT's mission and program of work. Ambassador Luoto has played a critical role in promoting the Initiative as an enduring partnership committed to building partner capacity to combat nuclear terrorism and has represented the GICNT tirelessly and extremely effectively in many international fora. We are grateful for his advocacy on behalf of the Initiative and for his leadership and close involvement in setting and carrying out its priorities. We are also grateful to Finland for hosting the successful Implementation and Assessment Group Meeting last year in Helsinki. I look forward to hearing Ambassador Luoto's reflections on his experience as Implementation and Assessment Group Coordinator and his recommendations for future activities and priorities.

I commend the progress made by the GICNT's nuclear detection, forensics, and response and mitigation working groups, chaired by the United Kingdom, Canada, and Argentina, respectively. I congratulate the Working Group Chairs on developing a diverse range of practical GICNT activities that have effectively addressed the difficult and emerging challenges in combatting nuclear terrorism. The GICNT could not succeed without the leadership and direction provided by the working group chairs.

Similarly, the GICNT could not have accomplished so much in two years without the contributions of the partners and official observers. I thank those of you who added expertise to GICNT events by sending representatives to present national models and share experiences, best practices, and lessons learned. I especially thank each country that volunteered to host a GICNT activity and I look forward to recognizing your efforts in the coming sessions.

I would like to also recognize two of the more recent additions to the GICNT partnership who have taken an active role since becoming members. First, I would like to formally welcome the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism as an Official Observer. UNOCT joined the GICNT one year ago at the IAG Meeting and has already contributed by co-sponsoring a regional response coordination and legal frameworks workshop in Nigeria this past April. This was the first workshop that Nigeria has hosted, and the first GICNT activity in Sub-Saharan Africa, since joining the Initiative two years ago at the Tokyo Plenary. The success of the GICNT is based upon partner participation so I commend both Nigeria and the UNOCT for

embracing the mission of the Initiative and working together to promote key counter nuclear terrorism principles.

GICNT Progress Since 2017

The Global Initiative held 17 successful multilateral activities since the 2017 Plenary meeting in Tokyo, guided by the work plans adopted by the three working groups there. Many of the activities explored the interface between nuclear detection, response, and forensics, and addressed regional counter nuclear terrorism challenges and approaches to enhancing cooperation. In reviewing the work of the GICNT, I am impressed by the diverse, but practically focused activities. Recent tabletop exercises and workshops promoted strengthening national frameworks for decision-making and coordination across government agencies and counter nuclear terrorism stakeholders; identified mechanisms for regional and international cooperation during a nuclear terrorist incident that spans multiple borders; and explored ways to establish or enhance national capabilities that support the nuclear security mission.

Each of the working groups also addressed important technical challenges within their communities. The nuclear detection working group continued to promote the integration of technical and non-technical capabilities to support detection operations, including the use of scientific reachback support to aid first responders in identifying detected materials. The nuclear forensics working group developed a Self-Assessment Tool that will help partners assess their country's existing nuclear forensics capabilities. In using the Tool, partners can better understand and address their national nuclear forensics needs. The response and mitigation group identified critical prevention and response procedures to secure major public events from nuclear terrorist incidents. These are just three examples of how the GICNT is working to build capacity in key technical areas that enhance nuclear security.

The activities of the three working groups brought together experts from many different nations and disciplines to exchange best practices and strategies for confronting the threat of nuclear terrorism, including law enforcement, first responders, scientists, border and customs officers, foreign affairs experts, policymakers, and senior decision-makers. Providing a forum

that encourages dialogue and cooperation among global experts in each of these fields is one of GICNT's most valuable contributions to global nuclear security. I thank you all for your active participation in the work we have collectively accomplished.

Conclusion

The participation of nearly 200 experts and senior leaders here today demonstrates each of your government's political commitment to combating the threat of nuclear terrorism. I encourage you to continue to look for ways to embrace the mission of this partnership. I ask you to consider committing to host, organize, and send experts to attend GICNT activities. Finally, I urge you to commit to other national actions that promote national or international capacity-building in other areas of nuclear security related to the GICNT Statement of Principles.

For our part, the United States continues to prioritize efforts to strengthen nuclear security domestically, bilaterally, and through multilateral organizations and institutions, such as the Global Initiative. We are committed to upholding the principles of the GICNT, and to working with our Russian co-chair in advancing the work of the partnership. Good work has been done by the GICNT over a long time, and we remain focused upon working with our partners to sustain this emphasis.

Once again, thank you for your commitment to the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and for being here this week to set the Initiative's priorities for 2019-2021.

Thank you.