

So where do things stand today? Yesterday, both Cloakrooms asked Senators whether they wished to offer any amendments. On our side there are about 20. I am now beginning to review the amendments and discuss them with Members and their staff to see if we can reduce that number. The majority is doing the same.

It is my hope, Mr. President, that, working with the chairman of the committee, Senator CHAFEE, and the majority and minority leaders, we will be in a position to bring the bill up, for debate and for amendment, within a matter of days. For my part, I will do whatever I can to make this possible.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PEACE—ELIMINATING TONS OF WEAPONS GRADE PLUTONIUM

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I traveled to the recent Summit meeting in Moscow. At that Summit, a protocol was signed that will, if successfully implemented, safeguard 50 tons of Russian weapons-grade plutonium and transform it into new forms that should ensure that it is never again used in nuclear weapons.

I've placed special emphasis on this agreement for many months, and I invested a great deal of personal effort to achieve success. I welcome these recent steps. At the same time, I recognize that this protocol only creates an opportunity for real progress, we have to go far beyond just signing the protocol to secure the benefits that it can provide.

I've spoken out in the past on the need to ensure that Russian stocks of weapons-grade materials do not find their way to terrorists or rogue states. The current financial crisis in Russia only adds further emphasis to these concerns. The former Soviet Union relied on guards and guns to safeguard their fissile materials. Now those guards may not have been paid for months—that has to increase our concerns. At the Summit we certainly heard about the tremendous burdens being borne by the Russian people from the current economic uncertainties and rampant inflation.

Some programs already exist to improve the protection of nuclear materials. The Materials Protection Control and Accounting program is demonstrating some real successes in improving this situation. But the current opportunity to remove 50 tons of weap-

ons-grade material from potential weapons use is most unique. I've worked to be sure that we quickly seize it. In fact, my visit to Russia in July with Senators THOMPSON and GRAMS was motivated largely by my interest in finding ways to progress more rapidly with this 50 tons.

After that visit in July, I spoke with you about my misgivings with the Administration's plan to couple the rate of weapons dismantlement to the rate at which the weapons-grade plutonium could be used in reactors, as mixed-oxide or MOX fuel. At that time, the Administration was planning for Russia to use about 1.3 tons of this material per year in a set of Russian reactors. I argued that this was far too slow a rate. It would take 35 years to dispose of the 50 tons at that rate—none of us can be the least bit sure that the current window of opportunity for progress with Russia will stay open anywhere near that long.

In July, I proposed that we structure an agreement that decouples the initial steps in dismantlement from the final step of reactor use. Specifically, I believed that the Russians would accept a program that targets a goal for moving 10 tons per year of weapons-grade plutonium through the weapons dismantlement step, through conversion of classified shapes into unclassified ones, and into safeguarded storage. These steps have the effect of significantly reducing the risk that this material will be re-used in weapons.

We still need to proceed with the final disposition of the Russian plutonium in reactors, and I want to accomplish that step as rapidly as possible as part of our overall integrated program on plutonium disposition. But construction of MOX fuel fabrication facilities, plus limitations on the number of reactors in Russia that can accept MOX fuel, will lead to slower progress for this final step.

I discussed this approach with President Clinton in late July and encouraged that plutonium disposition be a focus of his next Summit. I appreciate his willingness to include this subject at the Moscow meetings.

I've just recently corresponded again with the President to outline my suggestions on key principles that should guide our negotiations of the detailed agreements required to implement the new plutonium disposition protocol. In that letter, I repeated my strong advice that he appoint a special envoy charged with the entire plutonium disposition effort. This program requires coordination across multiple federal agencies, as well as negotiations with Russia and the G-7 countries. In my view, an envoy who commands domestic and international respect, and who clearly has Presidential authority, is essential to expedite success.

I listed six key negotiating points in my letter to the President. First, I emphasized that agreements must focus on rapid progress for the initial steps of the process, the dismantlement, con-

version of classified shapes, and the safeguarded storage. These steps can and should be targeted at a rate of 10 tons per year.

Second, all milestones that we establish to gauge progress must include sufficient transparency that we can be positive that agreed-upon steps are accomplished.

Third, Russian plutonium must eventually be used in MOX fuel, but the rate for this step will be much slower than 10 tons per year. Nevertheless, we need to make progress toward this ultimate goal and this step must be part of the overall integrated program. I also noted that in my conversations with Russian leadership, they are very sensitive to achieving the best utilization of their plutonium. They believe that new generations of reactors can best utilize some of their plutonium. I believe that we should respect their interests, as long as the weapons material is always stored under effective safeguards while awaiting eventual use.

Fourth, we should minimize the construction of new Russian facilities. We should seek and perhaps help to convert some existing Russian facilities. For example, some of their weapon production facilities should be converted to weapon dismantlement.

Fifth, it is important to involve the other G-7 countries. Plutonium represents a global risk prior to disposition and careful disposition of plutonium is a global benefit. For that reason, we should encourage meaningful participation from our G-7 friends as we work together on these goals.

And finally, we should assure that any U.S. resources that subsidize the Russian Federation's program are provided only upon assurance that tasks and milestones were satisfactorily completed.

It will be a challenge to negotiate agreements that follow these six points, but it is essential that we promptly start serious negotiations. I'm pleased to be informed by the Administration that the first discussions with the Russians on this subject will occur very soon.

In closing, I want to note that this current emphasis on disposition of excess weapons materials is only one action in what I hope will be a long series of important steps toward dramatic reductions in global risks and tensions. This agreement is important, but it has to be followed by more agreements. Each of these subsequent agreements must be carefully and fully implemented, and should target further reductions in the large world-wide stocks of weapons materials.

In order to achieve these reductions, new agreements have to be in place to inventory global sources of fissile materials; and obviously all nations will eventually have to participate to achieve real success. Other future agreements need to provide reliable counts of actual warheads, and eventually to dramatic reductions in the numbers of such warheads.