PROGRESS REPORT: Smallpox Eradication: Destruction of Variola Virus Stocks
(Resolution WHA60.1 (2007))
Agenda Item 43g

WRITTEN STATEMENT:

- The United States thanks WHO for the report on *Smallpox Eradication: Destruction of Variola Virus Stocks*, detailing the 22nd WHO Advisory Committee on Variola Virus Research (ACVVR). The United States agrees with the Advisory Committee’s acknowledgement of the benefits of research into variola virus, including for the control of other orthopoxviruses, particularly monkeypox.

- Smallpox remains a potential threat to the global community. Much of the world’s population has never been vaccinated against smallpox and would be at risk were an outbreak to occur.

- As indicated in the Director-General’s report on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} ACVVR, we support the recommendations that approved smallpox medical countermeasures to be included in the WHO emergency stockpile, to expand and enhance access to countermeasures for prevention and control of monkeypox and smallpox in an emergency, to continue diagnostic development, and to continue the biennial inspections of the two repositories.
• The United States continues to support the goal of destruction of smallpox stocks – but only when critical public health and biodefense goals that rely on research using live virus have been met. However, the risk of re-introduction of smallpox continues to evolve with scientific advances, and we must recognize the possibility of recreating smallpox is not theoretical, but could be achieved by highly-skilled and well-resourced scientists or organizations.

• We have not yet achieved the countermeasures research goals set at the Assembly in 2001. Before any consideration of destruction, we must continue the development of effective smallpox antivirals and point-of-care diagnostics. In the view of the United States, this underscores the need for continued biodefense research – some of which requires the possession and use of the live virus according to biosafety and biosecurity regulations and best practices -- to develop an effective suite of medical countermeasures.