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## **NTI Co-Chairman Sam Nunn Applauds Opening of Russian Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility**

Former Senator Sam Nunn, co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), today underscored the importance of the opening of a chemical weapons destruction facility in Shchuch'ye, Russia, where approximately 5,500 metric tons (more than 11,000 pounds) of Russia's nerve agents are stored in almost two million shells. Funding for the construction of the facility was made possible by the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, now in its 17<sup>th</sup> successful year.

“When I visited the Shchuch'ye chemical weapons storage facility in 2002 with Senator Richard Lugar, I was reminded how vulnerable the storage facility has been and of the potential risk of chemical weapon shells being sold or stolen. A single shell holds tens of thousands of lethal doses of nerve agent, which demonstrates the importance of securing and destroying these deadly weapons as soon as possible. These chemical weapons, including VX nerve gas, will now be drained and destroyed, moving the destruction of dangerous chemical weapons forward in a significant way.

“As part of this overall effort, NTI committed \$1 million to help build a railway bridge across the Miass River connecting the Shchuch'ye chemical weapon storage facility to the destruction facility. The railway is required to safely and securely transport approximately 1.9 million chemical munitions located at Shchuch'ye from storage to destruction. In an example of the kind of international cooperation that is essential for reducing the global threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, Russia has worked with NTI and the United States, British and Canadian governments on this important project.

“The United States and Russia have been working together at Shchuch'ye for more than a decade, but this critical work has been delayed on both sides by technology disputes, bureaucratic roadblocks and a lack of funding. I am pleased that these hurdles have been overcome, and I commend Senator Lugar and other key leaders who have worked tirelessly to reach this important milestone.

“Russia has the world's largest declared stockpile of chemical weapons. The United States and Russia have joined 186 other nations in agreeing to destroy their chemical weapons as part of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Shchuch'ye chemical weapons destruction facility puts us one step closer to that goal. Destruction of these stocks is a critical part of the global fight against WMD proliferation and catastrophic terrorism.”

*The Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) is a charitable organization working to reduce the threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.*