

Nuclear Disarmament
Towards Securing a Global Future for Humanity

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Seminar on Nuclear Disarmament:
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Introduction

In preparing my remarks for this occasion, I was struck by the extent to which the agenda of Pax Christi mirrors much of what the Charter of the United Nations stands for in the field of international peace and security, particularly with respect to disarmament and the peaceful settlement of disputes. This just makes it all the more an honour for me to be here today.

It is, however, quite a challenge for any speaker to visit Ireland and presume to offer new insights on global nuclear disarmament. After all, Ireland has pursued this goal for generations. It was an early initiator of the process that led to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); a founding member (and current coordinator) of the New Agenda Coalition; a

world leader in confronting the serious environmental and security problems from commercial uses of plutonium; and a dedicated advocate of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). One might even say that Ireland's efforts for nuclear disarmament have now become part of the its national identity -- a stance that is both morally right and in the service of its legitimate national security interests.

"Securing The Future of Humanity"

This is a time, to be sure, when such leadership is most needed, for the future of humanity -- the subtitle of this seminar -- remains very much in jeopardy by the global nuclear menace. The tens of thousands of such weapons that reportedly remain -- many still on hair-trigger alert -- are silent testimony to humanity's uncanny aptitude to perfect the arts of destruction, relative to its still-primitive accomplishments in mastering the arts and sciences of peace.

Much is said and written these days about the horrible dangers associated with the proliferation of such weapons to other countries or the acquisition of such weapons by terrorists. We hear, for example, dire warnings of the dangers of such weapons "falling into the hands of" all kinds of shabby, disreputable actors on the world scene.

Yet let us not allow the global nuclear menace to be so caricatured, for the true menace of such weapons lies in the very nature of the weapons themselves. These are weapons that killed well over 100,000 Japanese civilians in World War II. The radioactive fallout from atmospheric tests of such weapons is now detectable literally everywhere on Earth and, according to recent studies, is itself responsible for thousands of additional casualties. Others have died from the uranium mining and manufacturing operations to produce such weapons. Various nuclear weapon programmes, we now know, also engaged for decades in human experimentation to assess the biological effects of such weapons or their special radioactive materials. The weapons have given rise to the unspeakable doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which wilfully places the lives of millions of innocent civilians in jeopardy. This is a doctrine cynically offered in the ostensible interest of preserving the peace -- a doctrine now implicitly or explicitly endorsed as a national security policies of no less than eight countries, and many more if one includes alliances.

It is also worth recalling that the economic cost of these nuclear weapons programmes has been staggering -- the Brookings Institution once estimated that the total, cumulative costs of the US nuclear weapons effort alone has been over \$5.6 trillion! Yet each year tens of billions are added to these programmes around the world, while the total level of global military expenditures for 2001 was about \$839 billion, according to a recent estimate by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Perhaps there is a grain of truth in the words of Andrew Undershaft -- the millionaire arms merchant in Shaw's *Major Barbara* -- who said, "The more destructive war becomes the more fascinating we find it." Yet even Undershaft -- whose motto was "money and gunpowder" --

might have been troubled by the evolution of the destructive arts by the dawn of the 21st Century. This summer, a morbid fascination with violent conflicts will peak again with the release of a new film in the West -- aptly entitled *The Sum of All Fears* -- about an urban nuclear holocaust unleashed as the result of a lost nuclear weapon. While fortunately it is not yet fully a case of art imitating life, the film should serve to remind the public of the enormous danger that would arise from the theft or loss of even a single nuclear device.

Such reminders are important, for the non-use of nuclear weapons since 1945 has lulled the public into a dangerous complacency about the risks inherent in the very existence of such weapons.

While the focus these days is typically on the safe custody of nuclear material in the former Soviet Union, who remembers data released some twenty years ago by the US Department of Defense on no less than 32 accidents involving nuclear weapons -- some involving the detonation of high explosives, and two resulting in the dispersal of nuclear materials? Among these so-called "Broken Arrow" incidents were the actual loss of five nuclear weapons -- most reportedly without their nuclear cores -- during aircraft emergencies off the coasts of Delaware, Georgia, and Washington State in 1957, 1958, and 1959 respectively, and in the Pacific Ocean in 1965. The nuclear components of two bombs were also lost in 1956, when a US military aircraft disappeared without a trace over the Mediterranean.

These were accidents involving the weapons of only one country. Who knows what similar events might have occurred in any of the other countries that possess such weapons -- or additional events that simply never became public? What a frail basis indeed for the future of humanity -- perpetual nuclear terror, secrecy, and good luck!

The Road to a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World

It is precisely humanity's rejection of this type of dysfunctional "world order" that has motivated countries like Ireland to work hard at eliminating all such weapons. While there is clearly much work to do before this goal can be achieved, I find it very encouraging that countries are continuing to come up with new ideas to bring us to this promised land. I would now like to address two recent developments that will shape future progress in this field.

On 8-19 April this year, the United Nations hosted the first Preparatory Committee meeting leading up to the 2005 NPT Review Conference. These meetings are important occasions to gauge the progress of efforts to implement that key treaty. This year's meeting was attended by 138 states parties, 62 non-governmental organizations, and eight specialized agencies and regional intergovernmental organizations.

I cannot overstate the importance of this review process not just for the future of that treaty, but in many ways also the future of international peace and security -- and humanity itself. It is important to recall that the states parties agreed in 1995 to extend the NPT indefinitely only after

deciding on measures to strengthen the treaty's review process and to identify some clear principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Also part of the 1995 decisions package was a resolution calling on states to take practical steps toward the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon states made an "unequivocal undertaking" to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The states parties also agreed on 13 steps for the systematic and progressive achievement of the goals of Article VI of the treaty pertaining to disarmament. I am pleased to note that the group that played such an important role in forging this consensus on these 13 steps was the New Agenda Coalition -- with Ireland a key participant throughout. Proponents of nuclear disarmament were also gratified that the Final Document of that conference included a clear statement that "the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons."

This year's Preparatory Committee meeting, however, contained some good, but also some bad omens for the future of the NPT's review process. On the positive side, several of the states parties offered some new approaches for advancing the treaty's goals. Germany, for example, stressed the importance of new measures to address the threats posed by non-strategic (or "tactical") nuclear weapons, and also called for the establishment of a reliable inventory on all nuclear weapons and stocks of fissile material usable for military purposes. Germany reminded the states parties that existing worldwide stockpiles of fissile nuclear materials exceed 3,000 metric tons, enough to produce more than 200,000 nuclear weapons. It underscored the importance of effective verification measures to ensure that weapons reduced in the disarmament process are permanently destroyed. Finally, Germany directed some attention to the issue of the delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction and also called for action to tackle the risks posed by the spread of conventional armaments.

Another country offering some thoughtful proposals was Canada, which submitted a working paper noting that while the 2000 NPT Review Conference created two new reporting requirements -- relating to nuclear disarmament and the Middle East resolution -- it did not spell out any details of what specific types of information should be in those reports. Canada offered its own ideas on how to address this problem, arguing specifically that it would be advantageous to develop a standard reporting format. This proposal pinpointed a very important issue that states parties will continue to consider in the years leading to the 2005 Review Conference. All of the nuclear-weapon states, needless to say, did submit some information to the Preparatory Committee, albeit with widely varying formats and substantive details.

The general mood of the Preparatory Committee meeting, however, was one of considerable frustration with the lack of progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. Speaking on behalf of the New Agenda Coalition, Egypt noted the continued existence of defence doctrines that were based on the possession of nuclear weapons and declared that the "lack of progress" on disarmament was inconsistent with the "unequivocal undertaking" made by the

nuclear-weapon states at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Like Canada, the New Agenda states argued that the all states should submit reports on the implementation of Article VI, including "specific and complete information" on the progress in implementing the 13 steps. Like Germany, the New Agenda Coalition stressed the need for new controls over non-strategic nuclear weapons and existing holdings of fissile nuclear materials.

There were, however, also some disappointments. The nuclear-weapon states showed little interest in Canada's proposal, and argued that they would determine for themselves what types of information they would supply to the Preparatory Committees and the Review Conference. The United States took a step back from its support in 2000 for the 13 steps for nuclear disarmament, saying that "engaging in technical or legal interpretation of the steps individually or collectively would not, in our judgment, be a useful exercise." The US has already repudiated outright two of the 13 steps -- the support for the ABM Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban treaty -- and its refusal to complete the ratification process of START II treaty (which would have eliminated all land-based multiple-warhead missiles) has led to Russia's recent announcement (on 14 June) that it would no longer regard itself as bound by that treaty. The US did, however, indicate that it would continue to maintain its moratorium on nuclear testing and that the country "is not developing new nuclear weapons."

The second recent development is of course the signing on 24 May by Presidents Bush and Putin of the "Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions," or the Moscow Treaty. Under this treaty, both sides would reduce the number of their deployed offensive strategic nuclear weapons to a level not to exceed 1,700-2,200 by 31 December 2012. Each party would determine for itself the composition and structure of its own strategic forces within that threshold.

This treaty is very significant indeed, though it is not properly called a disarmament treaty, because it does not require the physical elimination of even a single nuclear weapon. Yet it is still significant for the future of disarmament because -- as a bilateral arms control agreement -- it symbolizes an important step forward in the ongoing political rapprochement between two former adversaries who happen to possess the world's largest nuclear arsenals. There are those who continually argue -- in the familiar "chicken or the egg?" manner -- that disarmament cannot produce peace, and that peace is a prerequisite for disarmament to occur; this argument is often used as an excuse to avoid disarmament commitments. Such arguments will be harder to maintain in a climate of growing friendship and reconciliation between states that no longer target nuclear weapons at each other. Aside from the threats from the continued existence of nuclear weapons, the only major global security threat today stems from the danger of terrorists acquiring these and other weapons of mass destruction -- and nuclear weapons are useless either as a deterrent of that threat or as a response to it. Furthermore, the continued existence of nuclear weapons stockpiles only creates new terrorist risks, through sabotage or theft of weapons or their nuclear materials.

The Moscow Treaty of course has many flaws. It expires in 2012 and contains an

unconditional three-month withdrawal clause. It does not contain any details about verification, though an accompanying non-binding Joint Declaration states that the verification provisions of the START I treaty will "provide the foundation for providing confidence, transparency, and predictability in further strategic offensive reductions." It lacks a timetable for the process of reducing numbers of deployed weapons. It lacks any provision for the subsequent disposition of warheads that will no longer be deployed. It lacks language governing the fate of the many delivery systems of such weapons. Yet despite these and many other shortcomings, it would be premature to condemn this treaty as meaningless -- history's judgment on this treaty will clearly depend on what follows.

Here the focus returns, predictably enough, to the NPT review process, for this review process offers the world its opportunity to find the answer to exactly this question: *what follows?* Since the Moscow Treaty is so vague in terms of its relation to disarmament, and given the "unequivocal undertaking" of the nuclear-weapon states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals -- the world is entirely justified in expecting some demonstrable progress in achieving this goal. Here is where the need arises for some standards of transparency and accountability to ensure that disarmament is, in fact, underway. These are just the standards that the Non-Aligned Movement, Canada, Germany, Ireland (with its other New Agenda members) and countless other countries around the world are now seeking to establish and see implemented.

The world is seeking the total, irreversible, and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons through binding legal commitments. Nobody can seriously argue that the mere re-location of weapons constitutes disarmament -- any more than one can argue that the continued spread of nuclear weapons constitutes non-proliferation. The two greatest nuclear-weapon states can make a giant step ahead on the road to nuclear disarmament if they have the political will to do so, but to achieve the full benefits for international peace and security, they must also acknowledge that the rest of the world has a legitimate right to watch what follows and to demand concrete progress.

If what follows includes -- the development of new nuclear weapons; the targeting or use of such weapons on non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT or nuclear-weapon-free zones; policy statements or doctrines heralding the security benefits of nuclear weapons; the resumption of nuclear testing; the lack of evidence of weapons being destroyed; the continuation of doctrines of nuclear deterrence; the development of new nuclear-weapons delivery systems; the perpetuation of first-use nuclear doctrines; the maintenance of weapons on hair-trigger alert; the continued deployment of tactical nuclear weapons; and other such activities -- then I fear that the NPT, in the recent words of Canadian Senator Douglas Roche, "will fall apart like soggy bread."

The Growing "Crisis of Multilateral Disarmament Diplomacy"

Others have used other physical analogies to describe the disarmament's current predicament. At the start of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, Secretary-General Kofi Annan

warned of the dangers of the accumulation of "rust" in the UN's own disarmament machinery, which includes several important institutions including the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC), the General Assembly's First Committee, the Secretariat's Department of Disarmament Affairs, the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, and the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).¹ Last year, the Advisory Board reported its concerns to the Secretary-General about a "crisis in multilateral disarmament diplomacy."²

The origins of this crisis, and the reason for its persistence, lie much more in the domain of political will, than in any institutional flaws that can be cured by simple administrative reforms alone. The justification for this term, "crisis," unfortunately has many credible grounds. The world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum -- the CD -- has for example been unable to agree on a programme of work for many years, due to a chronic stalemate over priorities. This year -- when the UNDC was supposed to mark its historic 50th anniversary -- the Member States could not find time on the calendar even to schedule an annual meeting. While disarmament remains one of the top official priorities of the UN organization, the Department of Disarmament Affairs remains the smallest department in the UN, and it continues to perform its difficult work with a budget of less than half the price of a jet fighter -- less even than what the UN spends on cleaning services. The First Committee -- which has the difficult task of deliberating and voting on up to fifty disarmament-resolutions each year -- may find this fall that it only has four weeks to complete its work, according to some recent rumours. In the decade following the end of the Cold War, the Committee met for over seven weeks in 1990, six weeks each year through 1995, and five weeks from 1996 to 2001. By comparison, the UN's Second Committee on economic and financial issues met for nine weeks last year, and the Third Committee on social and humanitarian issues met for seven weeks -- in some recent years, these committees have each met for over 10 weeks.

The world community also seems unable to move forward on some specific proposals to move the multilateral disarmament agenda forward. In March 2000, the Secretary-General proposed the convening of an international conference on eliminating nuclear dangers. While this goal was later noted both in the Millennium Declaration and in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, nothing more has come of it. Another long-standing idea has been to convene a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament -- but this too has fallen short of the required international consensus.

In recent weeks, I have proposed the creation of a new International Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction that would address problems relating both to disarmament and non-proliferation, and that would cover all types of such weapons and their possible use by terrorists. Having two co-chairs, from the North and the South, it would be composed of world-renowned experts, have its own secretariat, an advisory board, and the capacity to undertake in-depth research. As a member of the earlier Canberra Commission, I firmly believe in the importance of such commissions in raising the profile of disarmament issues and in laying the way for future progress. I hope this will be another possible option the world may wish to pursue

in addressing this ongoing crisis in multilateral disarmament diplomacy.

Accompanying these various problems in the machinery of multilateral disarmament has been a rise of unilateral approaches to international peace and security issues, perhaps best symbolized by the decision by the United States to leave the ABM Treaty -- an instrument that the world community until very recently recognized as the "cornerstone of strategic stability." While the treaty was bilateral, the loss of such cornerstones is necessarily a matter of concern to all nations. The collapse late last year of efforts to agree upon a Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention represented an additional setback in global efforts to establish a multilateral means to verify compliance with that important treaty.

The reluctance of the nuclear-weapon states to support more detailed and standardized reporting on disarmament issues in the NPT review process is another manifestation of a broader trend that stresses national flexibility of action over the assumption of new responsibilities to pursue global collective goals. The adoption of nuclear deterrence doctrines and weapons capabilities by India and Pakistan offers yet another illustration of what may soon become a global trend -- in which states will increasingly base their security upon on the accumulation of weaponry, the pursuit of perpetual military superiority over one's perceived adversaries, and the avoidance of multilateral legally-binding commitments.

It is also somewhat ironic that the General Assembly deemed it necessary to introduce and approve a resolution last year to reaffirm that "multilateralism is a core principle in negotiations in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation." The very need for such a resolution offers its own clues about the state of multilateralism today in the field of disarmament.

I would like to stress that this crisis reflects a symptom rather than a cause of the current predicament of disarmament. The machinery would work fine if there were greater political will among the Member States to use it for their common purposes. There is no doubt whatsoever that the achievement of the primary theme of this seminar -- securing a global future for humanity -- will depend crucially upon political will.

Conclusion: A Time for a Disarmament Renaissance

The world community obviously has a clear stake in pursuing an alternative to the future of competitive nuclear armament leading to a final Armageddon. Facing the horrors of thermonuclear warfare, the peoples of the world will not allow their leaders to arrive at the point where, as Yeats once put it,

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

Disarmament, unfortunately, is not a automatic process. It requires sustained human attention and action by all sectors of society from the most powerful leaders to the average

citizen. The ideal combination is one of enlightened, dedicated leadership coupled with a well-informed and equally determined public -- all united in a network of cooperation spanning the globe.

Pax Christi is one of the many groups in society that not only recognizes this need, but has been taking steps for many years now to fulfil it for the good of humanity. The government and people of Ireland understand these issues well and are continuing their noble efforts to get rid of these terrible weapons once and for all. Working at the grass roots, at the level of governments and at international organizations, let us together continue our efforts to secure nothing less than a Renaissance for Disarmament -- a global future for humanity that is free of nuclear weapons. This is indeed the only way this goal will be achieved. This is our common path to a better world for all.

¹ Statement by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, SG/SM/7367, 24 April 2000.

² Report of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, A/56/418, 27 September 2001, p. 1.