

Arms Control, Disarmament and Their Future

Opening Remarks

by
Nobuyasu Abe
Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations, New York



United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues
Osaka, Japan
19 August 2003

Distinguished guests and distinguished participants,

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Japan, and Mayor Isomura and officials of the City of Osaka, for playing major roles in convening this United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues in Osaka. Entitled “Arms Control, Disarmament and Their Future,” this Conference would not have been materialized without the substantial political and financial support by the Government of Japan and its host, the City of Osaka.

I believe that the convening of this Conference signifies nothing less than a strong commitment by the Japanese Government to promote disarmament and arms control as well as unwavering efforts towards peace and disarmament by the people of the city of Osaka who proclaimed the Peace City Declaration in 1995.

Since many participants today are from Japan, I naturally think it would be convenient for me to continue my speech in Japanese. But it was prepared in English within the United Nations Secretariat that reflects the multinational character of the United Nations. Therefore, please allow me to give the rest of the speech in English.

The theme of this conference is the future of arms control and disarmament. In my view, they are cast under a dark cloud now. The future of arms control and disarmament is seriously threatened by recent political trends and events.

Since the end of the Cold War and until a few years ago, say until 1998, the world saw remarkable progress in arms control and disarmament, perhaps thanks to the general improvement of international relations after the end of the Cold War. START was agreed between Russia and the U.S. The Agreed Framework was signed between the DPRK and the U. S. The NPT was extended indefinitely. CTBT was opened for signature. CWC went into force. The Mine Ban Convention also entered into force. If you can correctly identify the years all these events took place, you may pass a term exam of Professor Simpson.

The fact is that these positive developments virtually ended in 1998. We all know that in 2001 the September 11 terrorist attack took place and the world changed. From the arms control point of view, it is also worth remembering that the lapse of the verification mission in Iraq started in 1998.

In my view, the deterioration of the international situation following a certain period of hope and goodwill after the end of the Cold War started to cast doubts about the effectiveness and utility of arms control and disarmament agreements. Notable setbacks include the crisis over Iraqi compliance with its disarmament obligations, serious concern about terrorism, heightened concern about weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists, serious concern about the breach of nonproliferation obligations, or even admission thereof, by certain States, to name a few.

This in turn weakened the commitment of States Parties to the multilateral arrangements for arms control and disarmament. In a way, they started to feed each other. The prolonged stagnation of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is symptomatic of these phenomena.

It is easy to put blame on the worsening international environment. But we cannot sit idle just complaining about the situation and the lack of political leadership. It is a great challenge to those who are involved in arms control and disarmament. And it is incumbent upon we who are attending the Osaka conference to come up with credible ideas on how we can overcome the current crisis and express our determination towards further progress in arms control and disarmament efforts.

Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

The first and foremost question in our disarmament work remains to be disarmament and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, by far the most destructive of all weapons of mass destruction. There has been certain progress recently in that Russia and the United States ratified their treaty, the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT), or the Moscow Treaty, which will reduce their strategic offensive weapons to the level of 1,700 to 2,300 deployed warheads. I hear complaints that the treaty should be made tighter to be verifiable and irreversible. Some point to the remaining so-called non-strategic warheads. But I think we should duly acknowledge the progress made so far as such, and see what further progress can be made. This progress is by no means insignificant, considering the fact that at the peak of the Cold War the two superpowers had well over twenty thousand nuclear warheads each, enough to have killed humankind many times over.

We should, however, not be complacent. There are many challenges that still are ahead. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. But it is faced with serious threats of being undermined if not unraveled. Threats to the Treaty come from various directions.

First, there is the threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons. I would call this “Article I and Article II threat of the NPT.” I think this is a good time to recall those articles. Article I : “Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly; and not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce any non-nuclear weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices.” This is a very heavy obligation. I emphasized some parts, which denote absolute prohibition enshrined in this Article. These parts are highlighted in my distributed text.

Under the NPT, nuclear-weapon States assume an extra heavy responsibility exactly because they have readily-available means to make nuclear weapons. Even though they may not be violating non-proliferation obligations superficially in the context of the IAEA, the Zangger Committee or the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whether they are members of them or not, if they materially contribute to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by a non-nuclear-weapon State, they are liable for a serious breach of the treaty obligation. It is noteworthy that the original framer of the NPT used the phrase “not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever.” Because it is very relevant in today’s context when serious concern exists about the spread of nuclear weapons or fissile material usable for dirty bombs to terrorists and other non-state actors. The attempts by Aum Shinrikyo to obtain nuclear weapons before they acquired chemical weapons are still fresh in our memory. It should also be noted that the term “non-nuclear-weapon State” here is not qualified by the phrase “Party to the Treaty.” That means you are not only prohibited from letting any NPT State Party acquire nuclear weapons but also non-NPT Parties such as India, Pakistan and Israel, or even after anyone, like the DPRK, has quit the Treaty.

Article II binds non-nuclear-weapon States Parties not to acquire nuclear weapons. So far, this obligation seems to have been kept well. Japan, Germany, Sweden, Canada and many other countries that initially were considered potential nuclear club members have all kept their promises well. But Iraq came very close to breaching the obligation clandestinely. It was from that experience that the IAEA strengthened its Safeguards system and drafted the Model Additional Protocol to prevent recurrence of such a clandestine development. If what has been reported is true, we may have failed in our efforts in the DPRK.

A nightmare for all of us who are involved in the NPT, the IAEA and all other multilateral arms control and disarmament efforts is that an NPT Party fully complies, at least superficially, with its IAEA Safeguards agreement and Additional Protocol, but still one day announces that it has successfully acquired a nuclear weapon. That may very well spell an end to the NPT. If not, the Treaty will be greatly devalued unless a determined step is taken to correct the situation. Here again, however superficially a country may have complied with the IAEA Safeguards requirements, if it acquired a nuclear weapon, it would be in fundamental breach of the NPT obligations and it should be held liable for it.

In other words, all Safeguards obligations under Article III of the NPT are, in an ultimate sense, just one yardstick. It does not make you innocent if you end up acquiring or letting others acquire nuclear weapons however skillfully you may have fulfilled the Safeguards obligations or negotiated yourself out of the binds of Safeguards obligations.

Let's leave Articles IV and V for the time being. The next challenge for the Treaty is no doubt Article VI. The nuclear disarmament obligation under this article seems threatened to be weakened. Disarmament advocates denounce that the nuclear-weapon States are reneging on the 2000 unequivocal undertaking for nuclear disarmament. They take the weak framework of the Russian-U.S. agreement, attempts to further develop and modernize nuclear forces, development of missile defenses and the new doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons, as indications of their weakening commitment. It seems dissatisfaction and a sense of unfairness on the part of some non-nuclear-weapon States is in turn weakening their eagerness to support the cause of nonproliferation. On the other hand, concern about the spread of weapons of mass destruction is prompting a resurgence of nuclear weapons. These trends are feeding each other to undermine the cause of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. We have to stop this.

Three years ago, the 2000 NPT Review Conference adopted a Final Document with "thirteen steps" for systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the Treaty. During the two Preparatory Committee meetings for the next Review Conference held so far, a number of State Parties expressed concern over the slowness in implementing the agreements reached in 2000, in particular the "thirteen steps" and the "unequivocal undertaking" by the nuclear-weapon States.

Every one of the "thirteen steps" is important. But of special importance among the "thirteen steps" perhaps is the need for the immediate commencement of negotiations on a treaty

banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The first one is a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, which is informally referred to as "Cut-off Treaty" or "FMCT." It is a useful tool to put a brake on nuclear arms buildup and proliferation, and has gained particular importance under increased concern about clandestine nuclear proliferation and terrorist acquisition. It is indeed regrettable that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the only multilateral disarmament negotiating body, has been deadlocked for over 5 years and unable to start negotiation on a Cut-off Treaty. I cannot use a stronger word to urge all the delegates to the Conference to demonstrate their utmost flexibility to agree on a work program and start working on disarmament agreements. I urge them to render their maximum support to the chair of the Conference. Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi is now assuming that position.

At the beginning of next month the third conference for the entry into force of the CTBT will convene in Vienna, Austria. I hope this is the last conference for the entry into force. We have waited for 7 years now for the treaty to come into force. The world is precariously depending on the moratoria declared by nuclear-capable countries. There is a pressing need for making such moratoria permanent and legally binding. Otherwise, one day we may have a country appear from the shadows and declare "Yes, I've got a nuclear bomb and I am going to test it."

The greatest challenge to the current nuclear nonproliferation regime, perhaps, comes from the apparent inability of the international community to cope effectively with non-compliance with the regime. It is encouraging, however, that at the last NPT Preparatory Committee State Parties expressed their "readiness to reinforce the efficiency of the regime, as well as instruments and procedures to react to cases of non-compliance." They expressed concern about the nuclear weapons programme of the DPRK and its decision to withdraw from the NPT, which they stated represented a serious challenge to the global nonproliferation regime. They called upon the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme in a prompt, verifiable and irreversible way.

Clear and correct directions have already been given. We need to take actions accordingly with a resolve to prevent the collapse of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. For many it is not enough to just state their opposition against proliferation. They have to act with concrete effective steps to prevent proliferation.

In that sense, we cannot understate the importance of the Model Additional Protocol as an essential tool for the efficient and effective functioning of IAEA safeguards. Thus far, only 35 countries have brought Additional Protocols into force. I wish to urge all the IAEA members to conclude Additional Protocols and echo the appeal made by the IAEA Board of Governors to Iran to promptly and unconditionally conclude and implement an Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement.

Despite some pessimism prevailing over the future of nuclear disarmament and non-

proliferation, we can congratulate the five Central Asian States on their conclusion of the Samarkand Treaty text on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia last September. Similarly, I encourage Mongolia to further consolidate its nuclear-weapon-free status. I wish to make a special mention here of substantive and technical assistance for both these initiatives provided by the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific headed by Mr. Ishiguri.

Terrorism

Combined with the concern about proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is the rising concern that such weapons may fall into the hands of terrorists. With terrorists being non-state actors, the threat cannot be deterred by the kind of means that have worked in conflict between states. They do not have territories or a national body of people that can become targets of deterrence. We have to come up with new thinking and tools to cope with this new threat. I hope this Conference serves as an opportunity to build on the common understanding established in the similar conference held last year in Kyoto. At that conference participants identified possible risks involving the use of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors, and concluded the following:

1. Multilateral arms control based on disarmament norms remains an effective basis for combating terrorism;
2. In the field of international and regional co-operation against terrorism, the sharing of information and expertise should be further encouraged;
3. The development of regional capacity-building should be encouraged;
4. The strengthening of the existing 12 terrorism-related treaties and conventions, including their universality, should be encouraged;
5. Full compliance with respective regional regimes on disarmament is an effective tool to combat terrorism;
6. Serious thought should be given to “failed” or ‘failing states; and
7. Full implementation of UN resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), is an effective way for member states to combat terrorism.

I should touch upon chemical and biological weapons because they are becoming as horrible a weapon as nuclear weapons with the advance of technology. I trust there are other conferences and forums that address these issues. So I would like to touch on a number of other aspects of disarmament that are gaining increasing relevance. They are non-proliferation and disarmament education, gender and small arms and light weapons.

Non-proliferation and Disarmament education

With new generations coming to maturity without knowing the horror of nuclear catastrophe, the need for education in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation has never been greater. As the real dangers of armed conflict persist, it is particularly important to combat

ignorance, complacency and culture of violence. Education programs for children and youth must integrate elements of the culture of peace, particularly knowledge about the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, small arms and international terrorism.

I hear that there is a constant decline in the numbers of visitors to the Memorial Halls in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is a source of serious concern. Not only am I afraid that the memory of nuclear disasters is gradually fading, but also world political leaders may be losing the correct perception of what terrible havoc nuclear weapons can cause. This is a frightening prospect.

In 2001, pursuant to a General Assembly resolution, the Secretary-General appointed a group of experts to undertake a study on disarmament and non-proliferation education. In the summer of 2002, these experts concluded their study and presented the Secretary-General and the General Assembly with a series of recommendations. This Conference provides an excellent opportunity to familiarize participants with these recommendations. Through the discussions to be held in Plenary IV and the Citizens' Forum which follows, the experiences of respective NGOs, intellectual organizations and cities will be shared and further progress in this area can be achieved.

Gender and Disarmament

By focusing on gender and disarmament linkages, the international community is presented with an insightful and different angle on the traditionally complex and politically sensitive fields of security, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. For more than a century, women, and women's organizations and movements have mobilized in support of peace and disarmament. In addition to participating in organizations alongside men, many women have found it more effective to organize separately. Women's organizations are an important international force, and their role, both now and in the future, should be given adequate attention. In 2001, the Department of Disarmament Affairs produced a set of Briefing Notes entitled "Gender Perspectives on Disarmament." In April 2003, the Department launched a Gender Action Plan. The Plan is based on the conviction that disarmament can be strengthened through the integration of gender insights in disarmament debates, decision-making and actions.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

The uncontrolled and growing small arms proliferation is no less a concern than weapons of mass destruction. In Afghanistan, Iraq, in many countries in Latin America and Africa, and in countries of the former Yugoslavia, the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons has become a great threat to peace and security. Small arms exacerbate conflicts and increase risks for civilian populations, including refugees. Even after a cease-fire, their easy availability can contribute to violent crime, instability and banditry, and recurrence of conflict. Reflecting these concerns, the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects adopted an

86-paragraph Programme of Action, which contains unprecedented political commitments and concrete measures at the national, regional and global levels to tackle the illegal trade in small arms. As a follow-up action to review the implementation of the Programme of Action, the first Biennial Meeting of States was held in New York last month under the chairmanship of Ambassador Kuniko Inoguchi of Japan. While national reports submitted to the Conference showed some success in reducing illicit arms trade and improving stockpile management and marking systems, the meeting showed that much remains to be done.

Conclusion

Disarmament remains a complex field, encompassing many different issues. While there is already much activity in this field, the need for ever greater dialogue, cooperation and action cannot be overstated. This Conference provides an opportunity to take this dialogue one step further. I wish it great success. Thank you.