

# 2004 United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament

by

Nobuyasu Abe  
Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs  
United Nations



Certificate Award Ceremony  
United Nations, New York  
28 October 2004

It gives me great pleasure to address you on the occasion of the Certificate Awarding Ceremony of the 2004 United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament.

Though much of the United Nations disarmament machinery continues its struggle for consensus on certain intractable issues, it is unfortunately easy to forget that parts of this machinery are not only working quite well, but are also gaining recognition from Member States for their achievements. The Disarmament Fellowship Programme was established at the First Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978. Every year since, groups of young diplomats from Member States -- particularly from the developing countries -- have benefited from the Fellowship's training programme in the fields of arms control and disarmament. Its activities have been primarily focused on developing the theoretical knowledge and practical skills that could assist the alumni in representing their respective Governments at

various arms control and disarmament meetings and conferences. Yet the Programme has also been instrumental in promoting greater awareness of the importance and benefits of disarmament among its participants. By its very nature, the Programme, has been creating a unique multinational and multicultural environment for learning as well as for exchanging views, experiences and ideas, thus fostering a better understanding of the disarmament and security concerns of all countries.

The Programme has been implemented by the Department of Disarmament Affairs. Every year, more than 60 Member States submit applications for fellowships to the Department. After the detailed and careful selection process, up to 30 fellowships are granted for the given year. In this process, due regard is given to the balanced geographical representation of Fellows, as well as to the needs of Member States for strengthening their capacities in the field of arms control and disarmament deliberations and negotiations.

We note with appreciation that over the last few years there is an increased number of women candidates in national nominations. We see this as fully consistent with efforts inside the United Nations to promote gender mainstreaming, including such initiatives as the Gender Action Plan launched by the Department of Disarmament Affairs in April last year. I wish to recognize the eight women who participated in this year's programme and hope that Member States will do their part in sustaining progress in this area in the years ahead.

As of this year -- which marks the Fellowship Programme's twenty-sixth anniversary -- the Programme has trained almost 650 officials from 152 Member States. We are pleased that so many Member States recognized the usefulness of the Programme for enhancing the knowledge and skills of their young diplomats. We are also grateful that almost every year the number of countries that benefited from the Programme is rising. This year, for example, both Qatar and Turkmenistan have joined the States that have had their participants in the Programme. It is my sincere hope that other Member States that have never submitted their nominations for the Programme will soon follow their example.

The preparation and implementation of the Programme is a truly challenging task for the smallest Department of the United Nations and, indeed, it could not have been so successful without the consistent support of all Member States of the United Nations, as well as various international organizations. First of all, this support is evident in the high number of Member States sponsoring the biennial resolutions on the United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services, which are traditionally adopted without a vote. It is also expressed by Member States who organize study visits or workshops that enrich the syllabus of the Programme. This year the Fellows benefited from the study visits organized by the Governments of Germany and Japan as well as from the workshop organized by the Permanent Mission of the United States to the United Nations. Seminars and training sessions have also been organized by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Center for Non-proliferation Studies of the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Furthermore, the Fellows have also had the opportunity to participate in lectures on arms control and disarmament issues given by presiding officers of various international disarmament conferences and meetings, Permanent Representatives of Member States, senior staff members of Geneva-based research institutes, including the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

Accordingly, I would like to extend to all of them my sincere thanks for their invaluable assistance in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament. The study visits, seminars, lectures, and presentations on various aspects of non-proliferation and disarmament contributed considerably to enhancing the knowledge and skills of the participants in the Programme.

Indeed, it is evident that the Programme meets the demands and expectations of the Member States. A quick look around this hall proves that a considerable number of alumni currently represent their respective Governments in the First Committee. The same is true with regard to the Conference on Disarmament and other arms control and disarmament conferences and meetings. Alumni share their experience in disarmament with civil society, in various non-governmental organizations, and they also provide expert services to many international organizations dealing with disarmament and international security. Even some of the staff members of the Department of Disarmament Affairs are former Fellows.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me address few words to the Fellows.

In just few days you will return to your home countries, to assume responsibilities that will give you the opportunity to implement the new knowledge you have gained during the Programme. During the last two months, you have had an opportunity to learn a lot -- from the most reliable sources -- about current developments and trends in arms control and disarmament, and about new challenges to international peace and security. Moreover, you have seen the disarmament machinery in motion, not only addressing the issues on its agenda, but also engaging in the process of reforms to enhance its effectiveness in dealing with both traditional and new issues on its agenda.

I hope that participation in the Fellowship Programme will be a meaningful step in the process of learning the intricacies of arms control and disarmament, and that you will use your newly acquired knowledge and diplomatic skills in our joint quest for the better and safer world. I also believe that your new experience will help you to think and act creatively in searching for new, imaginative ways of dealing with global challenges.

The Programme has also offered you a unique chance to learn from your colleagues their perception of security, their concerns, and their national approaches to solving the crucial problems of our times. Thanks to that experience, your vision of the world affairs is now much broader, more sophisticated, and more universal. You have met new friends, whom you will see again either here, in the First Committee, or at other disarmament-related conferences. The new experience and new friendships will help all of you in performing your duties in international fora, particularly in efforts that require new cooperative and multilateral approaches to arms control and disarmament. Use your enhanced knowledge wisely, for the benefit of your countries, and for the benefit of the mankind.

I wish you all the best in your future careers.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

\*

\*

\*