

Introductory Remarks

By Sergio Duarte

"Time for a Revival of Disarmament?"

Lecture by Dr. Hans Blix



Center on International Cooperation
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Before I formally introduce our distinguished speaker tonight, I would like to thank Christine Wing and Bruce Jones of New York University's Center on International Cooperation for their many efforts in organizing this event. We in the UN Secretariat who work on international peace and security issues often pay tribute to the dedicated efforts of individuals and groups in civil society, including academia, to advance the solemn goals of the Charter. I am carrying on this tradition tonight not out of habit, but as a sincere expression of my personal appreciation for these efforts, which are vital to the evolution of a safer and more prosperous world for all.

I am sure this audience has heard the old saying, "where you stand depends on where you sit." As the UN's current sitting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, I have little doubt that you know where I stand on the importance and urgency of progress in the field of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. Progress in these areas will surely have profound implications for international peace and security.

Much of our work at the United Nations, for example, tacitly assumes that states or non-state actors will not resort to the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. And the world has long recognized that the most reliable way to achieve this goal is by eliminating such weapons, rather than by trying just to regulate them. There can be little peace or sustainable prosperity in a world poised on the brink of a nuclear apocalypse.

Without doubt, few people in this world are better equipped to assess the timeliness of disarmament than Dr. Hans Blix. His authority in this field is not due simply to his highly respected work as Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC). It is not due to his chairmanship of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission. It is not due to his long tenure as Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Nor is it due to his service as Foreign Minister of Sweden or his many academic contributions as a professor of international law.

No, his authority and expertise on disarmament issues derives from a wisdom and knowledge based on experience of working in all these areas. He has walked around the "nuclear-weapons beast" and studied it from many angles – he knows from whence it came, knows the risks such weaponry continues to pose throughout the world, and knows well what needs to be done to advance the historic goal of global nuclear disarmament.

He knows that achieving this goal will require a greater commitment to multilateral cooperation, sustained by enlightened national leaders and the support and understanding of civil society. He knows the importance of ensuring that this cooperation is guided and reinforced by the rule of law. He knows that international institutions will play indispensable roles in defining and in maintaining global norms for disarmament.

He is, in short, the right person, speaking at the right time, on the right issue.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the current President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, a personal friend, and a guiding light in the field of disarmament – Dr. Hans Blix.