

Opening Remarks

by

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Second Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2010 NPT Review Conference

Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland
28 April 2008

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak with you – the representatives of states parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – at the opening of this second session of the Preparatory Committee for the treaty’s 2010 Review Conference. My remarks are also directed to the large numbers of individuals and groups from civil society who care deeply about the future of this treaty and who are doing what they can to promote its full implementation.

Like others who follow NPT issues closely, I too believe that the 2010 Review Conference will be a watershed event for this treaty. Nobody of course can predict the outcome of that Conference, though we can all surely agree on the importance of its success and the need to avoid a repetition of the disappointing setback in 2005.

Fortunately, the circumstances today are in many ways better for the treaty than they were in 2005. I have in mind here positive developments in many treaty-related areas.

The nuclear disarmament initiative proposed by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn – known as the “Hoover Plan” – has been warmly welcomed throughout the international community. There are several other indications that “disarmament” is very much back on the public agenda. The world has also welcomed recent statements made by the leaders of France and the United Kingdom declaring reductions in their respective nuclear arsenals. Following up on its earlier studies on available means to verify nuclear disarmament, the United Kingdom proposed last February to host a technical meeting of the NPT nuclear-weapon-states to consider this issue further in a cooperative approach.

As is clearly stated in the NPT’s Preamble, disarmament entails the elimination of both nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, though the latter have tended to be discussed outside NPT arenas. Last October, for example, the Russian Federation and the United States offered a proposal in the UN General Assembly to internationalize the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, with the goal of eliminating ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of between 500 and 5,500 kilometres. And last February, both the Russian Federation and China offered a proposal in the Conference on Disarmament for a Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT).

These are all steps in the right direction – steps that will have to be followed by many others in the years ahead to fulfil our agreed common purpose of global nuclear disarmament.

It is true that the period after 2005 also had some setbacks, most notably the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic Republic of Korea in October 2006, which was actually a double setback for both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as a sober reminder of the inherent dangers from the misuse of sensitive technology acquired for peaceful uses. Yet the de facto international moratorium on nuclear tests has otherwise been holding up, as efforts are continuing worldwide to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force, preferably before the 2010 Review Conference.

There has been some progress in disabling the DPRK’s nuclear weapons programme – it is my hope that this process will also be finished by the 2010 Review Conference and that the

DPRK will attend that historic gathering as a non-nuclear-weapon state. I also believe that a diplomatic solution to persisting international concerns over nuclear activities in Iran should be possible to achieve prior to that event, a solution combining Iran's full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions along with full respect for Iran's legitimate rights to pursue peaceful uses of nuclear energy, consistent with the treaty.

Progress is also needed at the regional level. In the period leading up to 2010, efforts must continue to explore the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, a goal explicitly included in the package deal leading to the indefinite extension of the treaty in 1995, and reaffirmed in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. I hope that the nuclear-weapon states in particular will recognize the importance of pursuing this goal, as well as the importance of their ratification of the protocols to existing treaties establishing nuclear-weapon free zones in other regions. I fully expect that the Pelindaba Treaty will have entered into force by 2010, a goal that has been assisted by the fact that five additional states have ratified the treaty in the last three years. By 2010, I also hope that the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia will also have entered into force. Together, these outcomes will mark a significant step forward in advancing the goals of Article VII of the NPT.

As this audience well knows, I have been working on NPT issues for many years and I have come to appreciate now more than ever the importance of agreement on common purposes and a dynamic review process to assess how well the states parties are performing in achieving these purposes. The treaty embodies a delicate balance of ends and means. The ends include non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The means centre on the activities undertaken in the review process and in concrete policies and practices of states parties. There will always be some who urge more of an emphasis on some ends than others, and some who prefer a greater reliance on some measures than others.

Nevertheless, I hope all will agree that we are working together to achieve the treaty's three primary goals with the highest possible levels of accountability and transparency. This was the whole point of the terms for "strengthening the review process" that were adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 NPT Review Conference. I would caution here that we need to do more than just look back on this strengthened review process, but also consider how we can continue to strengthen this process in the years ahead.

Since the time available for substantive discussions was rather limited at last year's Preparatory Committee session – despite the leadership provided by its distinguished Chairman, Ambassador Yukiya Amano – I hope that your deliberations this year will enable more in-depth examination of key issues in these three key areas. The whole purpose of this second session is to lay a solid foundation for the vital third Preparatory Committee session – in other words, to establish some common ground on substantive issues and to resolve key procedural and administrative issues, including agreement on an agenda, before the opening of the 2010 Review Conference.

Accountability and transparency, however, do not only pertain to the disposition of the primary treaty objectives. They also include the important issue of financing of the Preparatory

Committee sessions and the Review Conferences. This is a vitally important issue since without financing, there is no review process, and this would only be a step toward having no treaty. The states parties – certainly not the United Nations – are responsible for ensuring that adequate funding is available to support the work of these conference events. It is incumbent upon me to raise this issue in light of the assistance that the UN's Office for Disarmament Affairs is expected to continue to provide throughout the review process.

This year, we were narrowly able to avert a crisis in funding, due to some last-minute commitments that enabled the opening of this Preparatory Committee session. States parties should view the payment of outstanding dues as a matter of some priority, and assessed dues should be paid well in advance for the remaining session of the Preparatory Committee and the 2010 Review Conference, in accordance with the deadline communicated by the Secretary-General. I really cannot overstate the importance of this issue – not only does it affect the whole multi-year review process, but delayed payments and non-payments cannot help but raise questions over the priority that states parties accord to their treaty. Of all the challenges facing the future of this treaty, adequate financing should be one of the easiest to meet.

I am confident that as states parties assess what they gain from the treaty, relative to the small costs of paying their dues, they too will conclude that we should not again have to scramble to “rescue” the treaty review process from another such financial crisis. After all, should this happen again, there will be no guarantee of any happy ending to such a crisis.

I will conclude my remarks today by referring to one of Geneva's most famous citizens, Voltaire, whose character “Candide” would predictably advise us all today to “cultivate our garden.” The NPT garden is, after all, not self-sustaining. It requires constant care and diplomatic husbandry of the highest order. The entire review process is essentially an exercise in tending to this NPT garden – to ensure that its various components remain in harmonious balance, and that it has the resources it needs. The future of the NPT is not set in some pre-determined fate. Its future is very much in your hands. In this spirit, I wish you a productive session.