

*SECRETARY-GENERAL'S ADVISORY BOARD FOR DISARMAMENT MATTERS*  
*50<sup>th</sup> Session, 9-11 July 2008*

Opening Remarks by  
Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs  
9 July 2008

Distinguished members of the Board,

I wish to begin today by congratulating you all for a very thought-provoking and productive session last February. I thank in particular Professor Adam Rotfeld for his personal efforts as Chairman to facilitate your deliberations. As the Advisory Board now passes the milestone of its 50<sup>th</sup> session, it is reassuring that its work is in such competent hands.

While the range of potential subjects that you could deliberate is quite broad indeed, I welcome the Board's decision, consistent with the wishes of the Secretary-General, to limit its focus to the same agenda items for its winter and summer sessions. The challenging issues of energy security, the "Hoover Plan" for nuclear disarmament, and emerging weapons technologies all merit the in-depth attention that only a focused agenda can provide.

I hope that this approach will enable you to develop some sound practical recommendations for the Secretary-General on each of the items on this ambitious agenda. Needless to say, the Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to assist you in any way we can as your work proceeds.

The Board is a unique institution within the wider United Nations disarmament machinery. You have a mandate to address issues in your personal capacities and this opens up new opportunities for a candid and confidential expression of views—opportunities that I am sure you will pursue throughout this session.

As you continue your efforts to agree on recommendations that will stand a good chance of gaining broad support from the Member States, I must say that international hopes for real progress on key disarmament and non-proliferation issues do appear—at long last—to be growing.

We are seeing, for example, some welcome steps forward in addressing nuclear concerns on the Korean peninsula. The first two sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference have proceeded rather smoothly. Though the treaty is still facing some very difficult challenges relating to its effectiveness and equity, I am impressed by a widely-shared determination among the states parties to achieve its full implementation. I was also pleased that the Panel of Governmental Experts on the Issue of Missiles in All its Aspects was able last month to adopt a consensus report.

We are seeing more indicators of a willingness of the nuclear-weapon States to make some new progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. Some have reduced their arsenals unilaterally, closed down facilities to produce fissile materials for weapons, and shut down nuclear-test sites. On the latter issue, the nuclear-weapon States are maintaining their moratorium on nuclear tests and we are even seeing some glimmers of hope once again for the entry into force of the CTBT.

I am also encouraged by several new initiatives in the field of disarmament in recent years. The 2006 report WMD Commission, chaired by Hans Blix, has been well received around the world and the Australian government has just announced its intention to create an "International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament". The Hoover Plan emerges, in this light, not simply as a one-time event launched by four American statesmen, but as an important part of a broader process to revitalize disarmament efforts worldwide.

The breadth of these undertakings is impressive, as they range from the United Nations, to plurilateral undertakings like the New Agenda Coalition and the Norwegian Initiative, and also encompass strictly national policy actions oriented to advancing disarmament goals. To these one must add the outpouring of ideas and proposals coming from individuals and groups in civil society around the world. Support for such initiatives is also appearing increasingly on the editorial pages of major newspapers.

Something new and exciting is underway in the field of disarmament, and I strongly hope that this Board has its own important contributions to make in moving this process forward. As welcome as are the many words that we have all heard on behalf of various "visions" of disarmament, there is still obviously a lot of work to do in converting these words into concrete deeds. As the Secretary-General said in his remarks to the Board last February, "The world must cross the bridge between what is and what ought to be." This is precisely the challenge that I urge the Board to address in its deliberations.

At this point, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the fine work of Patricia Lewis, who will soon be departing UNIDIR for her new position at the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies, at the Monterey Institute for International Studies. I am certain that her many contributions as Director have prepared UNIDIR to serve the international community well in the years ahead in what many hope will be a renaissance of multilateral efforts toward nuclear disarmament and conventional arms control. I would like to thank Patricia for her many years of distinguished service and wish her well in her challenging new job.

The work at UNIDIR, of course, must go on. In its capacity as UNIDIR's Board of Trustees, the Advisory Board will have to approve the submission of UNIDIR's annual report to the General Assembly and also recommend the subvention for the 2010-2011 biennium. In addition, the Board will have the challenging job of making a recommendation to the Secretary-General on a new Director of UNIDIR.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that this Board is addressing some of the most important issues on the agenda of international peace and security, at a critical juncture in history. I know that the Secretary-General appreciates your efforts and very much looks forward to seeing your recommendations. I want to extend to all members of this Board my very best wishes for a productive session.