

Keynote Address

By

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I wish to begin my brief remarks today by thanking the government of Ireland for its longstanding efforts both against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and on behalf of nuclear disarmament. As you know, the New Agenda Coalition was launched in Dublin and in other capitals of its partner states a decade ago – my country, Brazil, and Ireland have long been working together, both in this initiative and in many other arenas, to advance these great goals. I also salute the people of Ireland, for their continuing support for efforts to eliminate the world's deadliest weapons – they understand well the importance of this work.

Finally, I would like to pay my respects to the distinguished chairman of the Middle Power Initiative, Senator Douglas Roche, for his persistent and enlightened leadership in the cause of global nuclear disarmament, and more generally, on behalf of a more peaceful and secure world.

I know that the metaphor often used to refer to MPI's activities is that of a bridge – and it is a good metaphor indeed, for MPI has been building bridges ever since its creation in 1998. It has worked to erect bridges between the visionary and the practical, between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states, and between government and civil society. And all of these bridges converge on the road to nuclear disarmament.

The need for such bridges is quite clear, for the words of the Devil in Shaw's *Man and Superman* remain uncomfortably relevant today: "In the arts of peace," he said, "Man is a bungler." Yet our common purpose is surely very well established. The United Nations organization and its member states have been pursuing the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction since 1946, along with the goal of limiting conventional arms. The world has succeeded in concluding treaties to abolish both biological and conventional weapons, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty commits its parties to work for global nuclear disarmament, while the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty – when it finally enters into force – will ban all nuclear test explosions literally everywhere.

Clearly the failure to achieve nuclear disarmament is not due to the lack of a vision – for such a vision has existed throughout the world for decades. The failure is also not due to the lack of proposals for concrete action. They exist in abundance – as seen in the 30 nuclear-weapons recommendations of the international WMD Commission chaired by Hans Blix, in the 2005 report to Secretary-General Kofi Annan by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and in countless General Assembly resolutions, to name only a few. The current Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has repeatedly stressed the high priority he attaches to progress in nuclear disarmament. Since the launching of the Hoover Plan for a nuclear-weapon-free world, we have seen a cornucopia of nuclear disarmament proposals arising from civil society.

We are not seeing any lack of good ideas – if anything, we are seeing an *embarras de richesse* – yet with persistently disappointing results.

The missing ingredient appears to be political will – specifically, a firm commitment by the leaders of our world to make the achievement of global nuclear disarmament a high priority – high enough to invest substantial resources to secure its achievement. The bridge that most needs to be built today is the bridge between promises made and promises kept. I welcome all this new attention to disarmament by governments and civil society, but I caution all who care about this issue not to raise the flag of disarmament so high that it vanishes from sight.

Fortunately, we have initiatives like the Article VI Forum to keep our collective feet on the ground as we work for a world without nuclear weapons. As a result of your four earlier meetings, you have already identified seven priority measures that should indeed receive close attention by governments as preparations continue for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. These are sound priorities and have my full support. Each issue will of course require some further elaboration, and this particular meeting will address issues relating to verified reductions of nuclear forces, de-alerting, missiles, and space issues.

With respect to the reductions issue, I see you have wisely picked up the important principles of transparency, irreversibility, and verification, which have all been widely endorsed both in the General Assembly and in past gatherings of states parties to the NPT. You have also stressed the importance of binding undertakings, another important theme.

Unfortunately, concrete steps to nuclear disarmament will take hard and persistent work to resolve remaining technical and political challenges. One of the greatest hurdles ahead is the lack of what might be called a “disarmament infrastructure” in the states that possess such weapons. I am referring here to the absence of governmental agencies with official mandates in the field of nuclear disarmament, a problem that is further aggravated by the lack of budget allocations, operational plans, timetables, domestic legislation, and greater interest in the legislatures. As Gertrude Stein once said, “there is no there there”.

In terms of institutions, we still live in a world with nuclear-weapon complexes, but without disarmament complexes. With respect to the positive steps that some or all of the nuclear-weapon states have announced – which include some limits on deployments, a moratorium on testing, claims of stockpile reductions, a halt in the production of fissile material for weapons, tighter non-proliferation and physical security controls, and other such activities – these are all of course welcome. They are necessary, but far from sufficient for disarmament. They lack a foundation in binding commitments, and institutional and political support. Many are reversible, while others are declaratory in nature and not subject to verification.

The NPT’s Article VI is of course quite clear in stating that the responsibility for working for global nuclear disarmament is not limited to the nuclear-weapon states, but is instead a duty of all its states parties. The Middle Powers Initiative is in an excellent position to encourage the undoubtedly-growing set of countries that deserve to be called “middle powers” to signal the importance of nuclear disarmament in their official statements and diplomatic engagements. These include gatherings like the opening of the UN General Assembly, meetings of states parties to relevant multilateral treaties, and also in regional arenas. And MPI has always stressed the importance of working with groups in civil society to advance disarmament goals.

Together, this combination of focusing on the policies and priorities of middle-power governments, while strengthening advocacy efforts by civil society, will help significantly in addressing the elusive problem of “political will”, which so many commentators have identified as the leading obstacle to progress in this field. Under the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, we at the UN are also doing all we can to raise the profile and priority of disarmament.

The future of the NPT will depend on the confidence of its states parties that the treaty is achieving its stated objectives, especially disarmament and non-proliferation. These goals must be pursued simultaneously – commitments to non-proliferation cannot be held hostage to the prior achievement of disarmament, yet it is also true that progress in disarmament cannot await the solution of every possible threat

of proliferation. If we see virtual, rather than real, disarmament, we should not be surprised to find instances of virtual, rather than real non-proliferation ... and vice versa.

Non-proliferation and disarmament are not only collective public goods, they are mutually-reinforcing collective public goods that require the support of the entire world community. I am convinced that any effort to pursue such goals sequentially, rather than simultaneously, will only result in a devastating “perfect storm” of hyper-proliferation and hypo-disarmament.

So let me conclude today by thanking MPI for all of its efforts to move its important agenda forward, an effort that I hope will improve significantly the prospects for a successful outcome for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Please accept my very best wishes in the challenging – and I believe rewarding – work that lies ahead.