

Introductory Remarks

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International Conference on Arms Control Revisited: Non-Proliferation and Denuclearization

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Before proceeding with my brief remarks today, I wish to thank Professor Rotfeld and the Polish Institute for International Affairs for having invited me to this conference. His many years of contributions to arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament have been well recognized throughout the world, as indeed have the work of Dr. Gill and his colleagues at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Though this is my first visit to Poland, I feel very much at home among friends and colleagues, some of whom I have worked with for many years. Our purpose in attending this event however is not just to make a visit, but to re-visit the concept of arms control, especially as it applies to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

At the outset, I would like to say that I still prefer to maintain some distinction between “arms control” and “disarmament”, especially given the way that such issues are treated in the UN Charter, which addresses “disarmament” and the “regulation of armaments”. At the UN, a similar distinction exists within the concept of “general and complete disarmament,” which combines the goals of *eliminating* weapons of mass destruction with *regulating* or *limiting* conventional armaments. Secretary-General Ban just elaborated this concept in a speech at Harvard University on 21 October, where he included both activities among the most important “global public goods”.

I have mentioned these basic concepts not because they represent established, orthodox approaches, but because they remain relevant to conditions in our world, both today and tomorrow. As this conference proceeds to examine many rapidly-evolving issues—which include *new* actors, *new* risks, *new* initiatives, *new* instruments, *new* weapons and *new* threats—we will no doubt come to appreciate the continuing value of principles, multilateral agreements, and institutions that are actually quite *old*.

Our first challenge, therefore, is to explore how to make existing structures and functions work better; in other words, to revitalize—not to reinvent. Many of the new

and emerging threats we face, for example, can be best addressed by achieving universal membership in key multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, in taking steps to improve their implementation, and in expanding the resources and capabilities of relevant international organizations to advance the goals of such treaties.

It is unfortunately true that the many difficult obstacles to nuclear disarmament have led some to suggest that it is actually a utopian goal or fantasy. The difficulties, for example, of negotiating, ratifying, and verifying treaties have led some to suggest that treaties are just more trouble than they are worth. One often hears of various alternatives to treaties, including tacit agreements, unilateral initiatives, and joint actions by members of various coalitions of the willing.

One also hears that since disarmament is difficult to achieve, partial or incremental measures are more realistic to pursue. Under this approach, disarmament serves at best as a distant “ultimate goal”—a rhetorical flag flying in a cloud on some distant mountaintop, to which one must periodically salute, but never take too seriously as a practical guide to action. By this view, one might think about achieving such a goal only *after* the prior achievement of nirvana on earth—a stance that makes disarmament appear irrelevant in addressing pressing security concerns of the here-and-now.

The term “denuclearization” in the title of this conference, however, strongly suggests that the goal and process of eliminating such weapons is not at all *passé*. It is in fact more relevant than ever and tied more closely to progress in non-proliferation. There is without doubt a greater shared understanding in our world today of the complementary nature of disarmament and non-proliferation activities. This is a theme that the UN Secretary-General has repeatedly stressed in his statements, as did his predecessor.

While the world of course recognizes the continuing need for nuclear arms control—as manifested in reductions of stockpiles, the establishment of ceilings on

deployed weapons, the limiting of the numbers or ranges of nuclear-weapon delivery vehicles, and other such measures—the world is also becoming increasingly aware that as *necessary* as such steps may be, they are not alone *sufficient* to eliminate threats that nuclear weapons, by their very existence, pose to international peace and security. As stated in the final report of the WMD Commission, chaired by Hans Blix,

So long as any state has such weapons – especially nuclear arms – others will want them. So long as any such weapons remain in any state’s arsenal, there is a high risk that they will one day be used, by design or accident. Any such use would be catastrophic.

This is certainly not to argue that nuclear arms control can make no lasting contribution to world peace and security. Indeed, many of the proverbial “thirteen steps” listed in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference may justifiably be viewed as arms control goals. The overall purpose of those steps, however, was clearly to outline specific, concrete steps that are needed to achieve nuclear disarmament.

The world community has repeatedly voiced its expectations on this issue—in such venues as the General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament, NPT Review Conferences, as well as at intergovernmental regional gatherings. The world expects to see deep reductions in existing arsenals, involving not just restraints on deployments but also the physical destruction of weapons. It expects these reductions to be subject to verification. It expects disarmament to be undertaken in a transparent manner. And it expects that disarmament actions will be undertaken pursuant to binding legal commitments—in short, as obligations, not as magnanimous, discretionary gestures.

It is of course true that issues will be arising that will indeed require some new approaches. The current debate over the deployment of missile defence in Central Europe reminds us all of the lack of international legal norms in that field, especially after

the termination of the ABM Treaty. It also highlights the need for the world community to do more about stopping missile proliferation, as well as reducing and eliminating existing missile arsenals. People often forget that the preamble to the NPT envisions the elimination not just of nuclear weapons but also the means of their delivery, yet almost nothing has been done to achieve that goal on a multilateral dimension.

There is also an obvious need for new efforts to prevent an arms race in outer space—efforts that will likely require a combination of political and legal initiatives, ranging from various types of voluntary codes of conduct to outright bans. And consistent with the goal of “general and complete disarmament,” we should also be thinking about new ways to reduce and limit conventional arms. Just as progress is needed in both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, so too are efforts needed to reduce conventional arms as we progressively eliminate WMD. These are all goals that must be pursued concurrently, not sequentially, given the close relationships that exist among them and their complementary nature.

In conclusion, I can only say that we need some elements of both the old and the new in confronting the great challenges that lie ahead in dealing with all of these weapons issues. I look forward in particular to hearing any ideas the conference participants might have on the actual or potential roles of the United Nations in addressing such concerns. Please accept my very best wishes for success, not just in our work here today, but in all your future efforts to advance the historic goals of disarmament and non-proliferation in our troubled world.