

Opening Remarks

By

Hannelore Hoppe

Director

Office for Disarmament Affairs

Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

United Nations



Nuclear Renaissance and the NPT: Reinforcing the Three Pillars of the NPT
**The Seventh United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference
on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues**

Jeju Island, Republic of Korea

24-26 November 2008

[Presented 24 November 2008]

I am very grateful for the honour of opening this joint Conference of the United Nations and the Republic of Korea on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues, the seventh such conference in this useful and thought-provoking series.

I wish at the outset to express my deep and sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade for its support and assistance in making this conference possible. As was the case with our previous conferences—which have together been called the “Jeju process”—we are also fortunate to have an exceptional list of speakers from governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, industry, and international organizations.

Tourist pamphlets often refer to Jeju-do as the “island of dreams and fantasy.” While this may well be true, the problems that have inspired the world to pursue disarmament and non-proliferation are all too real. We cannot wish these problems away or effectively address them only through unilateral acts of policy. Such problems can only be solved by careful study, extensive cooperation among states on both regional and multilateral levels, and the progressive development of a “rule of law” that identifies agreed goals along with credible means to achieve them.

The United Nations has long stood for the rule of law in disarmament and it has achieved much over the years in promoting the establishment of basic legal norms in this field. Various institutions in the UN disarmament machinery—especially the Conference on Disarmament and the General Assembly—have assisted member states in concluding multilateral conventions to prohibit the production of biological and chemical weapons, as well as to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The United Nations also provides a common global arena for states to consider new initiatives. At a conference organized at the UN by the East-West Institute on 24 October, for example, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon offered a five-point proposal on how best to revitalize the international disarmament agenda, particularly with respect to nuclear weapons. One of these points addressed the rule of law in disarmament, a subject that he elaborated as follows (and I quote):

“ Unilateral moratoria on nuclear tests and the production of fissile materials can go only so far. We need new efforts to bring the CTBT into force, and for the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a fissile material treaty immediately, without preconditions. I support the entry into force of the Central Asian and African nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. I encourage the nuclear-weapon states to ratify all the protocols to the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. I strongly support efforts to establish such a zone in the Middle East. And I urge all NPT parties to conclude their safeguards agreements with the IAEA, and to voluntarily adopt the strengthened safeguards under the Additional Protocol. We should never forget that the nuclear fuel cycle is more than an issue involving energy or non-proliferation; its fate will also shape prospects for disarmament.” (end of quote)

The task of developing practical means to achieve legitimate agreed ends has long been—and remains—most challenging with respect to nuclear weapons. This applies especially to the Treaty on

the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and its three “pillars” of non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

This seventh Joint Conference is therefore devoted specifically to challenges facing the NPT, in particular those stemming from the widely-anticipated “nuclear renaissance,” a term most often used in reference to the expected international growth in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, especially the generation of electricity from nuclear power reactors. Yet given that dictionaries define a “renaissance” as a “vigorous revival”, I think it is appropriate to view this term in a somewhat broader light, one that covers each of the key pillars of the NPT: disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. From this standpoint, what is really needed is a revival of efforts across the entire spectrum of global nuclear challenges—in short, a “full-scope nuclear renaissance.”

This Conference is accordingly structured to address all these challenges. We will examine many of the issues confronting the 2010 NPT Review Conference, including the challenge of relations with non-parties, the problem of withdrawals from the Treaty, the need to expand and strengthen implementation of safeguards, options available for managing the nuclear fuel cycle, several avenues for enhancing the pursuit of non-proliferation and disarmament goals, and some specific nuclear and missile challenges faced in Northeast Asia.

Let me say that I very much look forward to the outcome of your deliberations, especially in view of the deep involvement of the Office of Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations in preparations for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We are currently assisting in the work leading up to the third session of its Preparatory Committee, which will convene next May in New York. We are doing all we can to support the Chairman of that session in obtaining agreement on an agenda for the next Review Conference and in laying the groundwork for what I hope will be a new consensus in 2010 on ways and means to revitalize efforts to pursue all of the treaty’s key goals.

The difficulty of navigating the road ahead cannot be overestimated. The issues are very complex and often involve difficult trade-offs. Efforts to improve non-proliferation controls cannot be held hostage to progress in disarmament, yet neither is it realistic to assume that such improvements will be possible to achieve without significant progress in disarmament. And while efforts to expand production of electricity from power reactors are needed to help in addressing the problem of global warming, such efforts will also come with new risks and responsibilities. The simultaneity of higher energy demands and proliferation concerns has created both political and economic obligations to address the question pertaining to the peaceful uses in a more concrete and urgent manner. This applies especially with respect to physical security, terrorist and proliferation threats, and other types of environmental dangers relating to the disposition of nuclear waste.

In this brief survey of just a few of the greatest challenges facing the NPT, I wish to encourage all participants in this Conference to focus their interventions specifically on some specific multilateral measures that would help in meeting these challenges. While national and regional initiatives can

also help enormously in strengthening the treaty, they alone will not be sufficient to achieve its great goals worldwide.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Critics of disarmament often assert that nuclear weapons, and their associated technologies, will be with us forever, and that the real challenge in the years ahead is just to stop their spread or acquisition by terrorists. In this connection, I would like to recall the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, chaired by Hans Blix, which reached a somewhat different conclusion in its report two years ago. It found that (and I quote):

“Weapons of mass destruction cannot be uninvented. But they can be outlawed, as biological and chemical weapons already have been, and their use made unthinkable. Compliance, verification and enforcement rules can, with the requisite will, be effectively applied. And with that will, even the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is not beyond the world’s reach.”

There is indeed much to gain from pursuing this approach, for the achievement of disarmament goals will help enormously in addressing both non-proliferation and counter-terrorism goals, while also strengthening public confidence that expanded peaceful uses of nuclear energy will not jeopardize international peace and security. This is the path that I believe will lead to what we all want to see—a “full-scope nuclear renaissance”.

In this spirit, please accept my very best wishes for a successful conference.