

Video Message from Sergio Duarte
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
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To
**US-China Regional Dialogue on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
Conference at Fudan University
Shanghai, China
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I am very pleased to speak with you today about the two great challenges of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. My only regret is that I was unable to be here personally given the opening of the 2008 substantive session of the General Assembly's First Committee.

I wish first of all to congratulate Fudan University and the Stanley Foundation for organizing this conference. The work of both of your institutions—over many years—in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation is well known to scholars and policy makers around the world. Yet this work was never more important than it is today, for the world is facing a convergence of four significant nuclear challenges that will require an unprecedented degree of mutual understanding and multilateral cooperation, both now and in the years ahead.

The first challenge concerns risks posed by existing nuclear arsenals—risks that include a heightened sense of insecurity, the dangers of unauthorized or accidental use, thefts of weapons or related technologies or materials, dangers from weapons on “hair-trigger” alert, the qualitative improvement of such weapons, and, most disturbing of all, the damage that the lack of disarmament will do to hopes for ending proliferation. By damage, I am referring to the erosion of the legitimacy of the “grand bargain” of the NPT, which lies at the heart of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The second challenge is to ensure that additional states are not acquiring, or seeking to acquire, nuclear weapons. This challenge, of course, cannot be achieved as a goal in itself, separate from the other challenges we are facing. Progress in non-proliferation helps to strengthen confidence in the achievability of a world without nuclear weapons, just as progress in disarmament increases the confidence of non-nuclear-weapon states that their prudent nuclear restraint will not jeopardize their security.

The third challenge concerns the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Here we see two additional converging trends: the growing demand for electricity, and the need to address the threat of global warming. I hope you will give this issue the priority it deserves and that you will approach the issue as a global energy problem, not just a problem facing nuclear power per se.

The fourth challenge is to prevent acts of nuclear terrorism. While this risk of nuclear terrorism is difficult if not impossible to eliminate, it can be reduced substantially, especially through tightened controls over weapon-usable fissile materials and a renewed effort to delegitimize all nuclear weapons. I hope you will examine the contributions that a fissile material treaty could make in addressing this challenge, and identify some options such a treaty could pursue.

For each of these challenges, I believe the solution will also require a convergence of public understanding, political commitments by leaders of states and governments, and persistent cooperation among states.

Much of this cooperation will take place in multilateral arenas—especially the UN disarmament machinery, which includes the Disarmament Commission, the General Assembly's First Committee, and the Conference on Disarmament. Each of these has a vital role to play in building global norms to deal with all the various threats posed by nuclear weapons. While achieving a consensus in these arenas is not easy, it is worth the effort because the norms they advance are viewed as legitimate—they are both fair in substance and produced through a process that is open to the participation of all states.

I welcome your joint effort to address these important issues and very much look forward to the result of your deliberations. Please accept my very best wishes as you commence the work ahead.