

Opening Remarks

By

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I am very pleased to welcome you to the 51st session of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. In particular, I wish to recognize Mr. Desmond Bowen of the United Kingdom and Ambassador Cheikh Sylla of Senegal, who are attending their first meetings as members. Another new member, Ambassador Donald Mahley of the United States, will be joining us shortly.

I would also like to congratulate Dr. Carolina Hernandez upon her appointment as Chairperson for 2009 and to assure her of the full support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). She is succeeding Professor Adam Rotfeld, whom we all salute for his outstanding chairmanship last year.

In addition, I welcome Theresa Hitchens, who joins us as the new Director of UNIDIR. As its Board of Trustees, the Advisory Board has long supported its work and I welcome her appointment. My Office will continue its close relationship with UNIDIR, given the importance we both attach to disarmament and non-proliferation education and in promoting these goals with civil society.

This Board is now confronting a paradox. It has recently witnessed many new disarmament initiatives, from both governments and civil society. Yet deep divisions persist within the UN disarmament machinery, and there is widespread disappointment over the slow rate of progress.

So how can the various actors—including member states, the secretariat, the disarmament machinery, and civil society—*revitalize* multilateral disarmament efforts in such a climate?

This is a question very much on the mind of the Secretary-General, who continues to rely upon this Advisory Board for its counsel. The Board's 2009 agenda consists of two items: (1) cyber warfare and its impact on international security; and (2) ways to strengthen verification, including the role of the United Nations. These difficult challenges can only be overcome through multilateral cooperation.

To help set the broader context for our work, I would like today to provide an overview of some important developments that have been or will be underway in the field of disarmament.

The UN disarmament machinery consists of various structures that contribute to the process of creating multilateral norms. With its deliberative mandate, the **UN Disarmament Commission** will open its 2009 session on 13 April. As in the past, the Commission has had its difficulties in reaching a consensus on its substantive work and is still seeking agreement on an agenda. Another part of this machinery, the General Assembly's **First Committee**, has remained deeply divided on several of its resolutions, notably those dealing with nuclear weapons issues.

While most delegations wished to move the disarmament agenda forward in both these arenas, the goal of achieving a consensus will depend upon the spirit of compromise shown by all member states. This relates more to political will than to any failure of the machinery itself.

The **Conference on Disarmament** faces a similar challenge. In his message read at its plenary meeting last month, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the Conference to pursue "practical negotiations that will lead to real disarmament." Though the Conference was unable to commence its substantive work in 2008, this was not due to any lack of effort by the Presidents of the Conference, its coordinators, nor its member states that worked

to find a consensus.

Nuclear-weapons issues were certainly “hot” in 2008. The **Hoover Plan** resurfaced in the *Wall Street Journal*, followed by—op-eds by former leaders in the UK, Italy, and Germany; the launch of the **International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**; a five-point nuclear disarmament proposal by the **UN Secretary-General**; new nuclear disarmament initiatives from the United Kingdom and the **European Union**; and the launching of **Global Zero**, a major civil society initiative on nuclear disarmament. The US and Russian Federation are working on a successor to **START I**. Verification issues appear in all of these.

With respect to the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**, the Fourth Ministerial Meeting in support of its entry into force was held on 24 September. The meeting launched a Joint Statement that has now been endorsed by 96 states, calling for the treaty’s early entry into force and for making this goal “a focus of attention at the highest political levels”. The next “Article XIV” conference to promote entry into force is scheduled for late September.

Another key event this year will be the third session of the **Preparatory Committee to the 2010 NPT Review Conference**, which will occur here in New York from 4-15 May. This important gathering will have to deal with several issues leading up to the 2010 Review Conference and I hope in particular that it will yield an agreement on an agenda and substantive recommendations.

Among the **non-proliferation challenges** are— persisting questions about nuclear activities in Iran, the DPRK, and Syria; the lack of a consensus on the nuclear fuel cycle; the need to develop regional nuclear-weapon-free zones especially in the Middle East; the commencement of negotiations on the proposed fissile material convention; and the need to improve safeguards and the security of nuclear materials.

Other concerns relate to **missile proliferation and missile defence**, including the development and testing of missiles in three regions, not to mention such activities by other states worldwide. Last year’s report by the UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Missiles urged new efforts to deal with these issues. At the request of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General is seeking the views of Member States on its findings and will submit his report next year.

With respect to **chemical and biological weapons**, concerns persist over their possible acquisition and use, especially by non-state actors. In implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, UNODA is updating the Secretary-General’s mechanism to investigate alleged uses. Our rosters now contain over a hundred experts from more than 20 countries, and over 20 labs. Working with its own technical experts, UNODA is also preparing handbooks for field investigations, drawing upon the expertise of other international organizations like WHO and OPCW. In addition, States parties to the BWC remain pleased with the work of the Implementation Support Unit in such areas as confidence-building measures, co-operation amongst international agencies, and in national implementation.

I would also like to attract your attention to activities under **Security Council resolution 1540** to strengthen norms against the proliferation or terrorist acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In November, UNODA launched a series of regional workshops aimed at national and regional capacity-building in border and export controls. The first workshop was conducted in Brazil with funding from

the EU and the Governments of Norway and United States. The Government of Qatar will host the next one, with several Arab States participating.

In the area of conventional weapons, there have been several interesting developments.

The adoption last year of the **Convention on Cluster Munitions** marked a milestone in global efforts to prohibit such weapons. Ninety-five States have signed it and four have ratified—it will enter into force after ratification by 30 States, which may happen later this year. The Secretary-General is the depositary of the Convention and he has been entrusted with a number of substantive tasks ranging from information management to the coordination of victim assistance.

In a parallel process, Member States of the **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)** who have been working on the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions failed to reach a consensus during five meetings held in 2008. They will, however, continue to work on the issue this year, in an effort to balance military and humanitarian considerations.

The States Parties to the CCW held its Ninth Annual Meeting in Geneva last November. The Meeting reviewed issues related to implementing the plan of action for CCW universalization, a compliance mechanism, a sponsorship programme, and a proposal for the establishment of an Implementation Support Unit for the Convention. My Office's Geneva Branch will continue to provide substantive and secretariat support to the Convention, despite a shortage of resources—both human and financial.

On landmines, the Ninth Meeting of States Parties to the **Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty** also took place in Geneva last November. Participants analyzed, discussed, and eventually approved 15 requests by States parties to extend the 10-year deadline for clearance and destruction of antipersonnel mines. Later this year, the Second Review Conference of the Treaty will be held in Cartagena, Colombia, which would provide an opportunity to take stock and review progress in implementing the Nairobi Action Plan, agreed at the last Review Conference in 2004. Our Geneva Branch, in coordination with other relevant departments and agencies, will be working on the preparations for the Conference.

As you may be aware, in 2006 the General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled “**Towards an arms trade treaty.**” The process for concluding such a treaty gained some momentum in 2008 with the convening of a Group of Governmental Experts to examine the feasibility, scope, and draft parameters for such an instrument. Taking into account views submitted by over 100 States in response to the resolution from 2006, the Group recommended further consideration of the issue within the United Nations. The General Assembly later decided to establish an Open-ended Working Group, which is expected to convene for two one-week meetings in the coming three years, starting next month. An interim report to the General Assembly is expected after the second session next July.

This brings me to the **UN Register of Conventional Arms**, which mainly contains data submitted by member states on their arms transfers. In recent years, the number of States reporting to the Register on transfers of major conventional weapons has dropped sharply. On the positive side, there has been a significant growth in the number of States providing information on transfers of small arms and light weapons. Government experts review the Register in three-year intervals—a new expert group started last week and will report this summer. I

hope that the 2009 review will assist in the Register's further development, as has occurred following earlier reviews.

In addition to the UN Register, Member States also use the **standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures**. The number of States reporting their military expenditures remained stable in 2008. In 2010, the standardized instrument will also be reviewed by a UN Expert Group for the very first time since its inception 25 years ago—a timely event, given the growth of these expenditures.

With respect to **small arms and light weapons**, the Security Council held an open debate last April on the issue. In July, the General Assembly convened its third Biennial Meeting of States on the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms. The Meeting produced an outcome document with thematic recommendations, and the General Assembly later agreed to convene another Review Conference in 2012. UNODA will assist in follow-up activities concerning these events, in particular the regional meetings in 2009 and 2010 on the Programme of Action, the planned meeting of governmental experts in 2011, and the Review Conference in 2012.

With respect to **ammunition for conventional weapons**, a Group of Governmental Experts convened last year to consider further steps to enhance cooperation on surplus stocks. The Group recommended that the UN develop guidelines for managing such stocks, which would be available for States to use voluntarily. These guidelines will likely evolve over the next two years. UNODA has taken the lead in managing the project in coordination with UNMAS and other relevant UN bodies.

While the effects of armed violence on social and economic development are known, more can be done to address this challenge, as emphasized in the 2006 **Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Prevention**. The General Assembly endorsed the Declaration last year and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the issue at its next session. UNODA will coordinate the preparation of the report with other departments and agencies.

Last November, the Security Council examined the **relationship between disarmament and development**. The high-level debate, chaired by President Arias of Costa Rica, stressed the value of strengthening collective security through regulation and reduction of armaments, which would free up resources that could be devoted to economic and social development. UNODA prepares an annual report on disarmament and development, which is a joint endeavour with DPKO, UNDP and DESA.

Turning now to regional issues, I am pleased to report that the **UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and Pacific**—now led by Mr. Taijiro Kimura—completed its move to Kathmandu last August. The Secretary-General was represented at its inauguration by his Chef de Cabinet, Mr. Nambiar. The Centre can now better interact with Member States in the region and serve their needs. It also provides a good opportunity for States in the region to take true ownership of the Centre by providing their political and financial support.

In other regions, Dr. Jacqueline Seck has been appointed the acting Director of the **Regional Centre for Africa**, which has expanded its geographical coverage and its cooperation with Member States, regional and sub-regional organizations, and civil society. With respect to the **Regional Centre for Latin America and the**

Caribbean, the cycle of the Centre's major projects came to an end in 2008, resulting in considerable scaling down of its staff and activities. A new round of resource mobilization is under way for the Centre's new projects developed under its new strategic plan.

Member States realize that providing the Regional Centres with necessary resources is the only way to enable them to carry out their mandates. Following the General Assembly's decision to fund from the UN regular budget three additional posts and the operating cost for the Regional Centre for Africa in 2007, the General Assembly adopted resolutions last year requesting the Secretary-General to provide from the biennial regular budget the necessary support to ensure the sustainability of the core activities and operations of the Centres in Lima and Kathmandu. I understand that Member States expect the three Regional Centres to be treated equally in terms the allocation of resources from the regular budget.

Elsewhere, the **UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Question in Central Africa** continues to serve as an important forum for promoting confidence and trust in the sub-region. Serving as the Committee's secretariat, UNODA continues to assist the Committee in all aspects of its work.

Last but not least, I wish to underscore the importance my Office attaches to our work in the **dissemination of information and our outreach to civil society** on disarmament issues. You have all received a copy of our flagship publication, the United Nations Disarmament Yearbook, and I would welcome any comments you might have on its content or new format.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that this Board is *itself* an important component of the UN disarmament machinery. As members serving in your personal capacities, you are freer to express your views than in any other UN or other multilateral forum, a capacity I hope you will use to develop practical and realistic recommendations for the Secretary-General that would secure broad support from the Member States. I look forward to hearing your respective views on these issues and wish you all the best in your important work that lies ahead.