

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**New Imperatives and Openings for  
A Nuclear Weapons-Free World**

By

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*New Imperatives and Openings for  
A Nuclear Weapons-Free World*

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Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome this opportunity to address this meeting of the Article VI Forum in Berlin. Many of you have been friends or colleagues for many years and I deeply respect your shared commitment in the great cause of disarmament. We are all grateful to the Government of Germany—not just for its generous support that made this meeting possible, but also for its own commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control. These goals, of course, are widely supported among the German people.

I also wish to commend the Middle Powers Initiative, and its new Chairman, Henrik Salander who I know is looking forward to building upon the heroic efforts of his predecessor, Senator Douglas Roche. He will have a good partner in Jonathan Granoff, the President of the Global Security Institute, as they work together in building new bridges between the vision and the reality of disarmament. It is no coincidence that the logo of the Middle Powers Initiative includes the image of a bridge—though in a country that pioneered *Ostpolitik*, I need not dwell on the importance of bridge-building to this particular audience.

We are gathering here today at a very auspicious time—yes, *auspicious*, even despite some evidence to the contrary. While the New Year began with new bloodshed in the Middle East, persisting nuclear-weapon concerns across the Asian continent from West and South to East, and some 26,000 nuclear weapons remaining in arsenals around the world, with thousands still on high-alert status—citizens and governments across the globe are clearly determined not to allow such circumstances to dash hopes for progress in disarmament.

Quite the contrary—we are witnessing a cascade not of new nuclear-weapon states, but of new disarmament proposals. In country after country, we are seeing an outpouring of innovative ideas to revitalize the multilateral disarmament agenda. Even beyond that, there are signs of a growing recognition of our common need to return to some fundamental norms. As we contemplate the treacherous road that lies ahead in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how ironic it is that we would come to appreciate the importance of looking back and re-dedicating ourselves to some of the Charter’s most venerable norms. These include disarmament, the regulation of armaments, the duty to avoid the threat or use of force, and the obligation to pursue the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Even the old UN goal of “general and complete disarmament” (GCD)—which is found in a dozen multilateral treaties—has attracted some new interest, as governments and civil society groups expand their efforts to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, while also pursuing limits in the production, sale, or use of conventional arms. And needless to say—it’s about time, given that GCD has now been on the agenda of the General Assembly for fifty years.

The focus of this particular Article VI Forum is distinctly in the realm of action—*action* in the face of “new imperatives”, and *action* to pursue new openings to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. This action-oriented theme echoes a priority of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who urged the Conference on Disarmament last week to “convert your discussions on procedure into practical negotiations that will lead to real disarmament.” It also echoes the approach outlined by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn in their op-ed of 4 January 2007 in the *Wall Street Journal*, where they said “Without the bold vision, the actions will not be perceived as fair or urgent. Without the actions, the vision will not be perceived as realistic or possible.”

Unfortunately, some people view these “new imperatives” strictly with reference to the proliferation-related activities of only certain states, or the dangers of nuclear weapons “falling into the hands” of non-state actors. To them, the problem is not nuclear weapons *per se*—just their acquisition by unreliable possessors. To them, we live not upon a common globe, but on different levels of a two-layered cake. On one thin layer of this cake they place those states that are somehow not only allowed—but believe they have something resembling a right—to produce, stockpile, modernize, transfer, deploy, and threaten to use nuclear weapons. On the other much larger portion of this cake, they consign those states that are denied such privileges, an arrangement they say is both sustainable and just.

Advocates of such views also consider their positions as practical and realistic, while they dismiss the goals of the disarmament community as hopelessly utopian or naïve. Such critics also typically fail to consider the dangers from the failure to *pursue* disarmament, for here is where the real problems lie, including the gravest risks of both proliferation and terrorism.

It is of course important to strengthen both non-proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts—both national and multilateral. But as necessary as such efforts are, they will not alone suffice to eliminate the global threats posed by nuclear weapons—including risks from their production, transportation, and storage; risks from their accidental or unauthorized use; risks of thefts of technology or weapon materials; risks that such weapons pose to the environment and human health; risks of sabotage; and, last but certainly not least, risks of their wilful use.

The very possession of such weapons by a few states—together with the logic used to justify their exclusive possession—have undoubtedly inspired their acquisition by additional states. And it has proven impossible to quarantine the doctrine of nuclear deterrence against its spread across the globe. Meanwhile, states continue to hold onto or seek such weapons as status symbols, as if possession will guarantee them a seat at some “high table”—an astonishing stance, given that the vast majority of the people of this planet view such weapons with repugnance, not admiration.

Yet today, it also remains true that most of the world’s population lives in countries that possess nuclear weapons. All such states say they have acquired just the minimum number needed to maintain nuclear deterrence—and if another state someday follows suit, it too will predictably use the same rationale, even literally the same words, also claiming that it had no choice, and that the acquisition of such weapons was exclusively the fruit of native genius.

So there is indeed a “new imperative” for action—but I believe the real “new imperative” is actually the *old* imperative of de-legitimizing nuclear weapons. This is a mission that offers the most stable and durable foundation for achieving both disarmament and non-proliferation goals, while maximizing the possibilities for reducing if not eliminating outright the risk of nuclear terrorism. I believe that the long-term future of the entire global nuclear non-proliferation regime will be a direct function of the extent to which the world community can de-legitimize these weapons themselves.

This is why the Middle Powers Initiative and its supporters are quite justified in focusing on Article VI of the NPT, for this article embodies a common, non-discriminatory standard of non-

possession. If backed by high standards of verification, transparency, and irreversibility, its full implementation would certainly enhance the effectiveness of the treaty regime. This is not utopianism, but realism in its truest form—it deals with the world as it is, a world in search of a fair deal, and a world composed of nations that do not wish to predicate their defence on the threat of mutual annihilation.

Surely, the less legitimate it is to *possess* nuclear weapons, the stronger will be the political and diplomatic basis for preventing the acquisition of such weapons by states or non-state actors. If the weapons *per se* are anathema, a non-possession norm will also help to focus the priorities of the diplomatic and intelligence communities, by clarifying what needs to be detected or prevented. It will also encourage or require militaries and bureaucracies around the world to pursue non-nuclear means of defence. It should also herald a new age of problem-solving through diplomacy rather than the use of force—an age that future generations will credit for its multilateral diplomatic efforts to address chronic planetary challenges that have defied solution by individual states.

This brings me to the “openings” for action, the second theme of this meeting. All of them stem from one very simple proposition—namely, that a country’s behaviour should at the very least be consistent with its agreed international commitments. Each of the most difficult obstacles we face today in achieving greater progress on nuclear disarmament relates in one way or another to a mismatch between agreed goals and committed means. What do I mean by this?

The objective is very clear: literally every state has in various ways endorsed the goal of global nuclear disarmament. Most have done so by means of their membership in the NPT, and the rest have registered their support through policy pronouncements and votes in the General Assembly on disarmament resolutions. The problem therefore is not the need to clarify the goal once again and *ad infinitum* thereafter. The common goal is already clear: non-possession. This is not a mere “vision” but a specific objective, intended to strengthen international peace and security, and to advance the broader, ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. I am of course encouraged every time I hear national leaders or former statesmen affirm their attachment to this goal, but in reality they are just re-iterating national commitments and pledges that have already been made. Much more interesting are the means that they are proposing to achieve that goal.

In the realm of openings for action, therefore, the real challenge remains in the domain of *means* rather than ends. These means include the full gamut of instrumentalities that are available to national governments—individually and collectively—to achieve their agreed goals. They include national budget allocations, policy directives, domestic laws, the establishment of implementing institutions with specific disarmament mandates, military doctrines and training protocols, investments in research and development, and other such steps to ensure that a country’s behaviour is consistent with its international legal and policy commitments.

Historically, the NPT review conferences have provided a common forum for all of the treaty’s states parties to agree on common criteria for implementing the treaty. No treaty text can spell out every minute detail of how it is to be implemented—this is why review conferences exist, to help states parties to ensure that their treaty is observed and kept up-to-date with changing conditions.

This is also why the understandings reached at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference—notably the decisions on “principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament” and on “strengthening the review process,” as well as the Middle East Resolution—are so important, as are the 13 steps agreed at the 2000 Review Conference. They too are part of the “grand bargain” of the treaty. They serve to keep the treaty’s grand bargain from degenerating, as Jayantha Dhanapala once put it, into a swindle. And this is why it is so important for the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference—which will meet next May—to reach a consensus on the procedural issues and hopefully on substantive recommendations.

We are all familiar with the agreed benchmarks or yardsticks for assessing compliance with the treaty, especially the disarmament commitments in Article VI. They include many I’ve already mentioned—such as transparency, irreversibility, and verification. The question then becomes, how are these standards to be maintained over time? How are states to engage in long-term defence planning if these standards are subject to unpredictable variations or uneven implementation? What can states do to give some permanence and stability to these commitments?

The answer is found in the process of making their commitments binding, whether this is done—as has recently been proposed by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon—through involvement in the negotiation of a nuclear-weapon convention or by means of a framework of separate agreements oriented toward the same basic objective. Bindingness serves an indispensable confidence-building role. I am less troubled by the lack of a nuclear-weapons convention, or any alternative package of agreements, than I am by the reluctance of states even to discuss the issue, let alone enter into negotiations on such commitments. It is this quality of bindingness that makes disarmament part of the rule of law, rather than subject to the vagaries of the law of the jungle.

In terms of new openings, therefore, I would like to see two developments. First, I would like to see a genuine commitment by states currently possessing nuclear weapons both to affirm without reservations their intention to eliminate them and to undertake specific concrete steps to advance that aim, including steps that are consistent with widely accepted multilateral standards of transparency, verification, and irreversibility. Unilateral actions are fine, as are declaratory statements, reductions in active deployments, and other such steps, as long as they are demonstrably taken in order to advance the disarmament objective, and performed in a way that satisfies these agreed multilateral standards, rather than just specific domestic constituencies.

In other words, states must “internalize” their international commitments to disarmament, through integrating them into domestic laws, policies, budgets, and relevant domestic institutions. Disarmament needs a national infrastructure, especially within states that possess nuclear weapons, and this would include the establishment of government offices with official mandates to promote and to implement disarmament activities. The absence of the word “disarmament” from official statements, organization charts, and government business cards points to the work that lies ahead.

With respect to my second “new opening” for action, I believe that disarmament also needs a stronger *international* infrastructure. Proposals have been made for many years to convene a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, and while there’s a consensus in principle on convening

such a session, differences remain over its agenda and objectives. Other proposals have included summits, Security Council meetings, and other such events.

The greatest obstacles to such initiatives relate to state policies and the lack of political will. I would certainly like to see the deliberative body, the UN Disarmament Commission, agree soon on an agenda for its next three-year cycle, which will enable it to get to work on developing consensus guidelines and recommendations. I would like to see movement toward a consensus on nuclear-weapon resolutions in the General Assembly's First Committee. I would like to see the start of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material treaty, and negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Coupled with the provision of additional support to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, and the UN Secretariat itself, I believe this would help to strengthen the international infrastructure that nuclear disarmament will need in the years ahead.

On 24 October last year, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced a five-point proposal for progress on nuclear disarmament, which I have used as the basis for my remarks today. He underscored the need for disarmament negotiations, whether focused on a nuclear-weapons convention or a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments, with verification. He called on the permanent members of the Security Council to address disarmament—as provided in the Charter—especially the challenge of achieving it securely. He underscored the need to strengthen the “rule of law” in disarmament and to improve accountability and transparency, while expanding universal membership in disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. And he identified many “complementary measures,” including several related to general and complete disarmament.

There is much food for thought in those proposals that I hope will receive close attention by those advancing various other initiatives, including the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament recently launched by Australia and Japan, and the “Global Zero” initiative—both of which have followed other worthy efforts, including those offered by the WMD Commission led by Hans Blix, the New Agenda Coalition, and Norway's seven-nation initiative.

Together, these efforts reflect a renewed international interest in advancing the disarmament agenda. Combined with recent statements of support for disarmament from the permanent members of the Security Council, as well as from the European Union and from other governments, I sincerely do believe that 2009 may well prove to be a watershed year for progress in disarmament.

Having entered this year through a gate of fire, the world stands a good chance of exiting this year on several promising new paths toward nuclear disarmament. The alternatives of having to encounter new gates of fire potentially involving the use of nuclear weapons should be a sufficient inducement to sustain such progress. I welcome the interest of all participants at this meeting in advancing the disarmament agenda and pledge that the UN's Office for Disarmament Affairs will do all it can to work with all governments and civil society groups to move this agenda forward. Please accept my best wishes in all your work.