



UNODA
United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs



... strengthening peace and security through disarmament

Response to Remarks by Chairman Boniface G. Chidyausiku



Meeting on Prospects for 2009 NPT PrepCom
Annecy
14 March 2009

I wish to begin by congratulating Ambassador Chidyausiku upon his appointment as Chairman of the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. He has stated that he views his role as a “facilitator” and I cannot think of a better approach for confronting the difficult challenges ahead.

As the Chairman continues his many efforts to forge a consensus on an agenda for the Review Conference—and on other procedural issues and substantive recommendations—I must confess that I feel a sense of *déjà vu*, as I recall my own labours at the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

In the end, of course, the states parties themselves bear the greatest responsibility for ensuring the success of the entire review process. Chairmen of the Preparatory Committee sessions and Presidents of the Review Conferences have essentially an integrative role—of expanding the scope of common ground among the participating delegations, identifying points of disagreement, and exploring possible avenues to resolve them.

While the Chairman has used the term, “facilitator”, one might also describe these duties as somewhat akin to the roles of a bridge-builder or fire-fighter. He is fully aware that he will be engaging in the “politics of the possible”.

Fortunately, current circumstances are different in many important ways from the situation at the last Review Conference. New leaders have appeared on the scene in many states. Bold new disarmament initiatives have been offered by groups that share a common determination to strengthen multilateral cooperation in this vital field. The states with the largest nuclear arsenals have been actively engaged in negotiations over the future of the START-I and future nuclear arms control to follow the expiration of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty in 2012. Hopes are brightening once again for entry into force of the CTBT. And nuclear-weapon states are still declaring that their respective stockpiles are declining in number.

While such developments certainly do not guarantee a successful outcome for either the next session of the Preparatory Committee or the Review Conference, I believe it is fair to say that the scope of what is “possible” does appear to have expanded, opening up new opportunities for the Chairman to use his diplomatic skills as a facilitator of consensus, on many levels.

All of us have heard dire predictions by various commentators of the pending doom of the NPT regime—we have seen such terms as “tipping point” and “cascade of proliferation”

used so often that they have become clichés. Many of these dark forecasts are due to proliferation concerns about nuclear activities in a tiny number of states—tiny, that is, relative to the overwhelmingly large number of states that are living up to their commitments.

More serious concerns have been voiced about the dangers of a decline in the legitimacy of the treaty given the uneven progress in implementing its primary goals—there is, for example, a perception that is widespread among the non-nuclear-weapon states that progress on disarmament needs to be revitalized, as do efforts relating to cooperation in the peaceful uses of all the various types of nuclear energy—and not *vis-à-vis* non-NPT states.

These concerns simply underscore the widely held belief that the entire NPT “grand bargain” must be kept. We are seeing here the interdependence of all key parts of that bargain, whose parts are all mutually reinforcing. Claims that all non-proliferation or counter-terrorist challenges must first be resolved before there can be real progress in disarmament entirely misconstrue the nature of this bargain—ironically, such claims will predictably only make it more difficult to achieve progress in eliminating global nuclear threats.

Equally mistaken, and even dangerous, in my view, is the contention that threats to the security of states must be eliminated before the international community can even begin to take nuclear disarmament seriously.

The NPT states parties need sustained, parallel progress in implementing all parts of the treaty, as well as the understandings and commitments reached at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 Review Conference. This of course includes some concrete efforts to pursue the goals of the 1995 Middle East Resolution.

Assessing progress in achieving such goals is precisely the *raison d'être* of the entire NPT review process.

With patient consultations, the Chairman—in his capacity as facilitator—will have much progress on which to build. I wish to add my own voice of support for his efforts in the weeks ahead, and the full cooperation of my Office for Disarmament Affairs in assisting all his important work.