

Panel of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly  
*“Current state of affairs in the field of arms control and disarmament  
and the role of the respective organizations”*

**Statement before  
The First Committee of the General Assembly**

by  
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I am very grateful for this opportunity to participate in this panel, together with my distinguished colleagues, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons—whom I warmly welcome for his first appearance before this Committee as Director-General—Ambassador Tibor Tòth, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, and Mr. Geoffrey Shaw, Representative of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the United Nations.

Before proceeding, I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of the distinguished members of this panel not just for participating in this event today, but also for their many contributions in advancing multilateral cooperation in disarmament and non-proliferation. They are uniquely prepared to address this Committee on the broad theme of this panel—namely, the *“Current state of affairs in the field of arms control and disarmament and the role of the respective organizations.”*

It is perhaps fitting to begin today with a few words on what might be called the “botany” of international relations from Dag Hammarskjöld. Members of this Committee might recall that he used to refer to disarmament as a “hardy perennial” at the United Nations. When he first used that term in 1955, that hardy perennial was already ending its first decade, as our work here to eliminate nuclear weapons and other weapons “adaptable to mass destruction” began with the adoption of the General Assembly’s first resolution on 24 January 1946.

Less often quoted were Hammarskjöld’s remarks at the University of Chicago Law School on 1 May 1960, on the subject of “The Development of a Constitutional Framework for International Cooperation.” In this remarkable speech, he stressed the importance of maintaining a balance within the United Nations system between its need for a strong centre to integrate its many activities, and the benefits of specialization among diverse organizations. Using another botanical analogy, he put this challenge as follows:

*... it is as if we were to permit the growth of a tree to be weakened by the development of too many branches, finally sapping its strength so that it breaks down under its own weight.*

He warned of two dangers—on the one hand, the “risk of disintegration of the international framework through a proliferation of organs”, and on the other hand, the risk of overloading one organization with ever-growing functions that it cannot alone handle. The solution he proposed was to maintain an “optimum balance” based on arrangements to enable the “integration of activities among autonomous organizations”. The challenge, he said, was to allow “for the delegation of powers within this or that organization without a breaking up of its inner unity.”

Hammarskjöld’s observations fifty years ago remain valid today, and I believe he would have been pleased to see the extent that what he called an “optimum balance” has been maintained with respect to the diverse intergovernmental organizations with significant responsibilities in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation. This balance is of course not

static, but continually evolving, and requires constant care and attention. It is, in some respects, similar to the balance that should be maintained throughout the United Nations disarmament machinery between the specific national interests of our Member States, and the common interest of the international community.

This is of course not the first time that this issue of balancing priorities has come to the attention of those who work to advance multilateral disarmament. On 24 September, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the High-level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament and Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations. On that occasion, he stated,

*Disarmament and non-proliferation are essential across the board, not simply for international peace and security. They can foster confidence among nations and strengthen regional and international stability. They are critical in realizing our common vision of a better world for all.*

This theme, which underscores that the genuine benefits of disarmament and non-proliferation are too important to postpone, set the tone for several additional statements by delegations participating at that event. Despite its many difficulties—past and present—the Conference on Disarmament remains a unique arena with the capability to ensure the advancement of national policy interests through the pursuit of multilateral cooperation for the benefit of all. The deeper this understanding is shared within the CD, the greater will be its potential contributions in the negotiation of future multilateral disarmament agreements.

This cooperation, however, does not only involve States—it also involves the dedicated work of a network of autonomous organizations that have mandates to promote specific disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

For its part, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) has maintained close relations with all the organizations represented on this panel today. As in previous years, we have continued to work in partnership with both the IAEA and the OPCW in organizing workshops to assist States, upon their request, in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). Our activities this year included capacity-building workshops hosted by Kenya, Croatia and Vietnam, which focused (respectively) on biosecurity and issues relating to export and border controls.

In terms of future events, I am pleased to report that a Meeting of international, regional and subregional organizations on cooperation in promoting the implementation of resolution 1540—hosted by the Government of Austria and organized in cooperation with UNODA—will be held on 15-16 December in Vienna.

I have every reason to believe that the long and productive working relationship between the UNODA and the IAEA will continue over the years ahead, with respect both to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. I expect that the Agency will continue to demonstrate its significant potential for contributing to the achievement of global nuclear disarmament, especially through its capabilities to verify independently the peaceful uses of material recovered

from dismantled warheads. Such work will be essential not only in verifying compliance with disarmament commitments, but also in helping to ensure the irreversibility of those commitments—two key multilateral disarmament standards.

My Office is also cooperating with the OPCW in many areas, including the prevention of chemical terrorism. The Organisation is part of the Secretary-General's Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and co-chairs (with the IAEA) the Working Group on Preventing and Responding to WMD attacks. We also have a mandate to cooperate in alleged-use investigations, in cases of possible chemical weapons attacks in a State outside the CWC or on a territory not controlled by a CWC State Party. The OPCW just invited UNODA to participate in exercises in Tunisia and Poland relating to responses to chemical agent releases, and to attend a Conference in Algeria against terrorism.

I would also like to note that the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference contains a request for both the OPCW and IAEA to prepare background documentation for the 2012 Conference relating to the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.

Of course, UNODA also works closely with the CTBTO and this cooperation has been especially active this year, involving our UNODA staff in New York as well as at our three regional centres. I was pleased to participate in the opening ceremony of the CTBTO's exhibition on 4 May at the United Nations on "Putting an End to Nuclear Explosions", held during the NPT Review Conference. We also worked together in organizing numerous events on the occasion of the 29 August International Day Against Nuclear Tests, commemorated in early September due to scheduling difficulties. Among other activities, the United Nations hosted a CTBTO exhibition on nuclear tests and participated jointly in a Panel Discussion on 8 September. On 9 September, the General Assembly held an Informal Meeting to mark the Observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Later, at the United Nations on 23 September, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the fifth ministerial meeting to promote the CTBT's entry into force.

Together, these various activities I have just surveyed illustrate a productive balance among the intergovernmental organizations represented on this panel today. For brevity, I have not mentioned countless other examples of cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, and with non-governmental groups, that together are helping to give disarmament efforts more momentum, while strengthening that elusive quality we know as political will. Delegations interested in obtaining further details on this cooperation can obtain this information at the UNODA web site.

All of this cooperation that I have just summarized takes place within a rational division of labour that balances general and specific interests. This approach will surely be needed in the years ahead because the challenges of eliminating weapons of mass destruction and of regulating conventional armaments are certainly among the most complex on the agenda of international peace and security. They are complex politically, technologically, and organizationally, and these challenges will only be met through a combination of enlightened national leadership, extensive multilateral cooperation among our Member States, and persistent advocacy, support, and understanding from civil society.

In closing, I would like to recall the words of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who visited the United Nations yesterday for the unveiling of his portrait. Though he had much to say in office about nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and the need for greater restraints on conventional arms, his remarks upon receiving his Nobel Peace Prize remain especially appropriate today. He said,

... beneath the surface of states and nations, ideas and language, lies the fate of individual human beings in need. Answering their needs will be the mission of the United Nations in the century to come.

As we continue our deliberations in this Committee, and as work proceeds in intergovernmental organizations in these fields, let us never forget that the real beneficiaries of disarmament—and the real victims of its failure to be achieved—are human beings. The business of disarmament is not just a vocation for the diplomats—it is very much the business of the peoples of the United Nations.