

Closing Remarks

By

Sergio Duarte

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations



Workshop on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons *Working
Towards a Successful 2010 NPT Review Conference*

New World Hotel
Makati, Philippines
2 February 2010

Before I proceed with my brief remarks at the conclusion of this Workshop, I wish to express my deep appreciation to our distinguished host, Dr. Romulo, and all of his colleagues at the ministry who have worked so hard to make it a great success.

This outcome, of course, does not surprise me at all, given the long tradition of support that the Government of the Philippines has given to global efforts to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation goals—efforts, I might add, that have been demonstrated year after year both at the United Nations and at countless NPT Preparatory Committee sessions and Review Conferences.

So I salute Dr. Romulo, the Government and indeed the people of the Philippines for their strong support for these great goals.

In confronting the great challenges relating to this treaty on many dimensions—political, technological, economic, and legal—the organizers of this Workshop wisely chose to organize our deliberations using the structure of issues that will be addressed by the three Main Committees at the Review Conference. They also selected excellent speakers who combined many years of personal experience, diverse geographic backgrounds, and deep substantive expertise on these issues. Needless to say, I know that Ambassador Cabactulan, the President-elect of the next Review Conference, will not be the only one here to day to have benefitted immensely from these presentations—I did myself.

Despite all the diversity of subjects addressed over the last two days, I come away from this Workshop more with a sense of the unity that lies beneath this diversity. And this unity offers a foundation upon which to build a positive, constructive outcome for the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

I have seen and heard evidence of a fundamental unity of purpose to defend and to reaffirm the central goals and obligations of this great treaty. The great ends of the NPT are often cited with reference to its three pillars: disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses. There is strong and I believe near universal support among the States Parties that these are goals worth pursuing—precisely because they serve both the interests of individual states and the collective interest. They are what Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called “global public goods.”

When I concluded my service as President of the 2005 Review Conference, I voiced my concerns over the climate of mistrust and mutual suspicion that pervaded our deliberations. Representatives from several States Parties had viewed the disappointing track record in nuclear disarmament as, in so many words, a demonstration of bad faith. I encountered similarly bitter reactions from other States Parties who felt that the treaty was not credibly serving to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation or to promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy. I believe that in 2005 there was also widespread support for the fundamental aims of the treaty, but what happened then—as had been hinted at earlier meetings of the States Parties—was the product of a growing awareness among delegations that the treaty’s separate goals clearly meant more to some States Parties than to others.

In addition, there were signs of sequencing and conditionality that had crept into the treaty review process, in contrast to the longstanding tradition of treating each of the pillars as vital to the credibility, effectiveness, and legitimacy of the treaty. This adamant insistence on “putting my goals first” was ultimately what brought down that entire Review Conference. When one bloc of delegations starts promulgating lists of preconditions for compliance with their own national commitments, it is not at all surprising to see other delegations following suit—and the result is predictable: a precondition race breaking that underlying spirit of unity, and yielding only a race with no winners.

We all know that—as a practical matter—a certain degree of conditionality is probably inevitable in the pursuit of all these goals. Disarmament will not occur with the snap of some fingers, even if this emanates from delegations of the most powerful states. Full compliance with non-proliferation and safeguards commitments is also less likely to occur when there is an abiding perception that the other goals of the treaty are not being fully implemented, and the same is true with the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

As I look back on my experience in 2005, I view it not so much as a disappointment, but as a learning experience. Despite my many years of diplomatic service before that event, I was abruptly reminded of how the deliberations in the review process are strongly affected by broader political trends in our world today, well outside our meeting rooms. In many ways, a review process serves as a kind of barometer—a device to inform us about dynamic forces in the world around us all. This is a world that is simultaneously being subjected to the inexorable currents of economic and technological interdependence, and the tenacious forces of national identity and independence. In this sense, when stormy weather comes, we can’t justifiably blame our barometers—we should better look at state policies.

After our deliberations at this Workshop, I remain more convinced than ever that the success or failure of the coming Review Conference will be a function of the degree to which the States Parties can acknowledge that they are working for a common cause, that each of the three pillars is vital to the health of the treaty regime and must be strengthened together with the others, that compromise advances national interests far better than simple confrontation and intransigence, and that the States Parties will be willing to work together in the NPT community service as bridge-builders and fire-fighters. This is how progress was made in 1995 and 2000, and I believe this remains the key to a successful outcome in 2010.