

# Opening Remarks

By

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I am very pleased to have this opportunity to welcome all members to this 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. I wish first of all to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Carolina Hernandez for serving as the Chairperson of this Board last year, and also to thank Ambassador Carlo Trezza for agreeing to serve as the Board's new Chairman. His long experience and dedication to advancing disarmament goals will help enormously in sustaining and building upon the productive work of the previous Board.

This Advisory Board is a valued part of the wider United Nations disarmament machinery. Its greatest asset is its independence, based on the fact that its members are appointed in their individual capacities and are not expected to serve as representatives of specific national policies. As a result, the Board can offer some fresh thinking about disarmament issues, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is the fifth UN Secretary-General to benefit from the Board's advice.

The year 2010 has the potential to mark a turning point in the history of disarmament— involving a shift away from a simple emphasis on the gravity of challenges to confront, to something quite different: concrete opportunities for progress. In many ways, the climate of world opinion and diplomatic circumstances are conducive to significant progress in this field, both with respect to challenges concerning the elimination of weapons of mass destruction as well as the regulation of conventional armaments.

With respect to the large cluster of issues associated with WMD, nuclear-weapon issues remain in the forefront of concerns throughout the world community. Even in this difficult field, however, I see potential for moving beyond merely describing threats, to charting concrete practical measures to address those threats. The Russian Federation and the United States will soon conclude a bilateral treaty to replace the expired START treaty, and they have also indicated their common commitment to consider future measures to reduce further their deployments of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The world has welcomed personal statements by the Presidents of both countries affirming their shared commitment to pursue a world free of nuclear weapons.

On 8 December 2009, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced his Action Plan to advance his five-point nuclear disarmament proposal a year earlier. His plan, *inter alia*, placed a heavy emphasis on the need to strengthen the “rule of law” in both disarmament and non-proliferation, including by promoting the consideration of a nuclear weapon convention and other steps to improve the universality and compliance with other multilateral treaties in this field. And on 25 March this year, the General Assembly will hold a thematic debate on "Disarmament and World Security: Challenges for the International Community and the Role of the United Nations."

And with these developments in the background, in just a few weeks from now, States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will meet here at the United Nations to commence the 2010 NPT Review Conference, an event intended to enable the States Parties to look

back at the Treaty's past implementation and seek agreement on future initiatives. So I cannot think of a more timely issue to have on the Board's agenda than the examination of conceptual issues associated with this treaty. I know the Secretary-General would appreciate hearing your views on this before the start of that Review Conference in May.

This Advisory Board has much to contribute by stepping back from the many details of treaty implementation to examine some broader conceptual issues. The most important question concerns the Treaty's contributions to international peace and security, as well as its function relative to the "ultimate objective" of "general and complete disarmament." Other conceptual issues relate to the status of widely agreed multilateral standards for assessing progress in nuclear disarmament—including the criteria of enhanced transparency, verification, irreversibility, and binding commitments. I hope you will also consider in your deliberations some specific contributions by the United Nations in the process of achieving global nuclear disarmament.

With respect to other WMD, I am encouraged that while biological and chemical weapons continue to pose their own intrinsic threats to international peace and security, the fundamental global norms against the production, possession, or use of such weapons not only remain strong, but—in many ways—are also growing stronger each year. No state boasts possession of such weapons or openly threatens their use—and there also appears to be a growing solidarity in the world community in support of efforts to prevent non-state actors from acquiring such weapons.

In this respect, I view the relevant Security Council's resolution 1540—as well as resolution 1887 which was adopted at the Security Council's summit meeting last September—not so much as *causing* the world to address such threats, but as *reflecting* a sentiment shared by virtually all countries concerning the emerging global taboo against WMD terrorism. The convening next April of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington is another reflection of the determination of States to address this challenge. Together, these various initiatives against WMD terrorism derive, I believe, from a growing international taboo against WMD *per se* regardless of who possesses them. The stronger that taboo—the greater will be the opportunities for international cooperation in strengthening it.

We have certainly seen some significant movement away from the proposition that nuclear weapons have a legitimate role to play in advancing national security interests. This is apparent in the activities of those States that have closed their nuclear test sites, stopped producing fissile material for use in weapons, eliminated broad categories of nuclear weapons and their associated delivery vehicles, and reduced the aggregate size of their nuclear arsenals. Yet nuclear weapons have not yet been fully de-legitimized, as some States continue to "modernize" their nuclear arsenals and to reemphasize how nuclear deterrence is an indispensable means of maintaining national security and the credibility of alliance defence relationships. History has unfortunately documented well how the proliferation of nuclear weapons has been accompanied by the proliferation of their associated doctrine of nuclear deterrence. The fact we are not seeing efforts to "modernize" biological or

chemical weapons, or to herald their value as deterrents, is a welcome reminder that security can be maintained without such weapons.

Unfortunately, we have seen no comparable progress whatsoever with respect to missiles or other nuclear-weapon delivery systems. There are virtually no multilateral legal norms against the production, stockpiling, transfer, testing, and use of long-range missile systems—and the same applies to missile defences and to other types of delivery systems, in particular long-range military aircraft. There is also no treaty outlawing weapons in space, despite many efforts in the Conference on Disarmament to pursue such a treaty.

In May 2009—just before the Board’s last session—the Conference was at long last able to adopt a substantive programme of work, which featured agreement to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, as well as substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament, negative security assurances, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Yet persisting differences prevented its implementation, a situation that has carried over into the current work of the Conference—even though the overwhelming majority of its members favour the commencement of negotiations on a treaty to halt the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons.

In addition to these challenges relating to WMD and their delivery systems, the world community is also facing many challenges with respect to the regulation of conventional armaments. The complexity of this particular challenge derives from the fact that there are several widely recognized legitimate uses for such weapons, both for specific purposes of national defence and for supporting the conduct of international peacekeeping operations.

In terms of legal commitments, legal norms governing such weapons have been emerging only gradually, and only with respect to certain specific types of weapons. I am referring here to three treaties in particular. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons—or “inhumane weapons” convention—and its associated Protocols dealing with explosives releasing non-detectable fragments, booby traps, incendiary weapons, blinding laser weapons, and explosive remnants of war. As for the Convention on Cluster Munitions, it will enter into force next August and its first Meeting of States Parties will take place in November. In addition, the States Parties to the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine-Ban Convention held their second Review Conference last year, resulting in the “Cartagena Action Plan” to address the needs of landmine survivors over the next five years.

In this difficult field of conventional arms, we are definitely seeing some new opportunities for progress in the years ahead. Efforts are underway to develop an Arms Trade Treaty—last year, the General Assembly agreed on a process that will lead to the convening of a four-week UN conference in 2012 to negotiate such a treaty. States are building upon the 2001 Programme of Action to explore new levels of cooperation in preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. As I noted, efforts are continuing to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions, and inhumane weapons. And the United Nations is continuing to encourage Member

States to make use of its two key transparency instruments—the Register of Conventional Arms and the UN standardized instrument for reporting military expenditures.

No doubt, 2010 will be a busy year for multilateral efforts in the field of conventional arms regulation. In the field of small arms, the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States to implement the Programme of Action will occur next June—this will be the last such meeting before the next Review Conference in 2012 on the Programme of Action. Preparatory Committee work will commence next July in anticipation of the 2012 UN Conference on the ATT.

Given that 2012 will be a milestone year for multilateral efforts in the field of the regulation of conventional armaments, the Board may wish to consider including this subject on the agenda for one of its future sessions. One possible approach might be to step back and examine some broader issues relating to the coordination or integration of all the various diverse efforts that will be underway relating to the ATT, the prevention of the illicit trade in small arms, and the transparency of armaments.

The emphasis I have given to the importance of multilateral cooperation on a global scale should not of course imply any negligence of the regional efforts with respect both to the elimination of WMD and the regulation of conventional armaments. The fact that there are now no less than five regional nuclear-weapon-free zones is a clear demonstration of how regional initiatives can contribute in strengthening global disarmament and non-proliferation goals.

Regional and sub-regional organizations—too numerous to list in my statement today—have launched initiatives to advance goals relating to the elimination of WMD, the regulation of conventional arms, and the prevention of catastrophic terrorism. I am pleased that the United Nations is making its own efforts to contribute to many such regional initiatives, as seen in the continuing activities of the three UN regional centres for peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific. Working often in partnership with national governments and regional organizations, these regional centres have been particularly active in working to strengthen controls against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, while also discouraging the testing and acquisition of nuclear weapons and other WMD. Among this work are several “training the trainers” courses dealing with the illicit trade in small arms. We are also organizing sub-regional workshops on the impact of Armed Violence on Development. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been and remains actively involved in organizing regional workshops to assist in the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1540.

Anybody who surveys the extraordinary range of the issues relating to the elimination of WMD and the regulation of conventional armaments—which together constitute our agreed ultimate objective of “general and complete disarmament”—cannot help but be aware of the fact that many of these challenges will require many years to address, if not generations. This brings me to the other important issue on your agenda concerning disarmament and non-proliferation education. While your deliberations on conceptual issues relating to the next NPT Review

Conference have great immediacy, the issues relating to education deal with several longer-term challenges.

Who will be the leaders of tomorrow in advancing disarmament and non-proliferation goals both in national policy and through collective, multilateral efforts? What kind of training will they have, especially in appreciating the vital necessity of international cooperation in addressing such challenges? Leaders in these fields will certainly require a substantial of support from civil society—for there could not possibly be a stronger foundation of “political will” than in an informed and active public.

For this reason, I view efforts in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation education as a true investment, whose dividends will be registered in the form of enhanced international peace and security. Such dividends will not only benefit the immediate goal of prohibiting or regulating this or that type of weapon, but will also help enormously in achieving many other of the wider goals of the UN Charter—including the peaceful settlement of disputes, the duty to refrain from the threat or use of force, and respect for the sovereign equality of States. Progress in all of these areas will in turn open up significant possibilities for achieving numerous other goals of the Charter, including in the realm of social and economic development and basic human welfare.

I would like to add here that the UN Secretariat has been working hard to promote cooperation with civil society in advancing disarmament goals. In July last year, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a multi-platform internet campaign called “*WMD – We Must Disarm*” to mark a 100-day countdown leading to the International Day of Peace on 21 September. And in Mexico City on 11 September last year, the Secretary-General addressed some 1,300 representatives of non-governmental organizations from over 50 countries, who had assembled for the 62nd annual meeting with NGOs, organized by the UN’s Department for Public Information, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the Government of Mexico. That event was devoted entirely to disarmament issues. The Conference adopted a Declaration endorsing the Secretary-General’s five-point nuclear disarmament proposal, and additional efforts to conclude an Arms Trade Treaty and new controls against the illicit trade in small arms.

In conclusion, I would like to assure all members of this Board that the Office for Disarmament Affairs looks forward to assisting your work in any way that we can. In this spirit, please accept my very best wishes for a productive session.