

Remarks by High Representative Sergio Duarte



Acceptance of a Petition for Global Nuclear Disarmament

United Nations  
2 May 2010

One of the great privileges of my job as the UN's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs is to meet from time to time with individuals and groups in civil society who share our goal of seeking to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Spearheaded by nuclear disarmament groups in Japan, a broad international effort has been underway in civil society to prepare a petition calling for the negotiation of a treaty on the abolition of nuclear weapons. The obligation to undertake such negotiations appears in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the General Assembly has repeatedly endorsed this goal in numerous resolutions, over many years. It is also a goal that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has included in his five-point disarmament proposal of October 2008 and his Action Plan for Nuclear Disarmament and Nuclear Non-Proliferation of December 2009.

Some of the groups that have been involved in preparing this petition have been working on nuclear disarmament for decades. I know, for example, that Gensuikyō—the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs—has been active for over half a century. Like many such groups, it recognized long ago that nuclear disarmament will not be achieved by experts alone and will also require support from civil society. It has pursued this goal through its publications, meetings, and through its impressive petition campaigns.

The signatures on this particular petition have been gathered by hundreds of organizations in many countries around the world. I cannot possibly name them all today—nor even begin to thank the individuals who have invested so much effort in gathering these signatures. But I do wish to express my deep appreciation for this collective effort.

I am deeply honoured today to receive the signatures of literally millions of people, including 750 mayors representing some 40 percent of all Japanese municipalities—all united in a common appeal for concrete steps toward global nuclear disarmament. To say this is an impressive achievement would be an understatement.

There is of course much work that remains before we can all enjoy the many benefits of a world free of nuclear weapons. I find it deeply inspiring that so many citizens would place their own signatures in support of this great cause. This only raises my hopes for new progress in the years to come.

On behalf of the United Nations, I humbly accept your petition—and on behalf of myself, I wish to express my thanks to each person who thought it was important enough to sign. The people have spoken. Their message is clear. Now let us get on with the hard work of not just advocating global nuclear disarmament, but actually achieving it.