

**Statement**

**The Secretary-General's Five-Point Proposal for Nuclear  
Disarmament**

By

***Sergio Duarte***

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs  
United Nations



**Seminar on**  
***Latin America and the Caribbean Facing Disarmament and Non-Proliferation:  
Opportunities and Challenges***

Montevideo, Uruguay  
8 November 2010

I am pleased to be here today, but am especially grateful to have this opportunity to address issues relating to the five-point nuclear disarmament proposal made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 24 October 2008.

Before addressing the proposal itself, I would like to first provide some historical context that will help in interpreting this proposal. Sometimes we are so preoccupied with current policy issues that we forget that we are grappling with challenges that many before us have confronted. There are lessons to learn in that rich experience.

Many of you here today might not know that disarmament is one of the oldest continuing activities pursued at the United Nations. The elimination of nuclear weapons was a goal included in the General Assembly's first resolution in January 1946, and there have been special offices with disarmament-related responsibilities in the UN Secretariat throughout the history of the organization.

Each of our Secretaries-General recognized the importance of disarmament, and each has had his own approach, though some took more of an interest than others. Trygve Lie, Dag Hammarsköld, and U Thant often stressed the potential contributions of science and technology in advancing disarmament. Thant and Javier Pérez de Cuéllar stressed the social and economic costs of the armaments race and were strong voices of support for disarmament among developing countries. Kurt Waldheim and Thant substantially expanded disarmament-related publications by the Secretariat. Pérez de Cuéllar often called for the UN to play a greater role in verification. Boutros Ghali viewed disarmament as subordinate to the larger challenge of the peaceful settlement of disputes, and he tried to integrate disarmament into the process of peace building. Kofi Annan raised the priority of disarmament, and restored its independent status within the Secretariat, while also placing a new emphasis on non-proliferation and counter-terrorist themes. And one of the first official policy stances taken by our current Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was to underscore his personal commitment to revitalizing disarmament efforts, both worldwide and at the United Nations.

Much of his initial work in this field was organizational in nature—after extensive consultations with Member States, he established the Office of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs with direct access to the Secretary-General. He also made a point of personally visiting each key component of the UN's multilateral disarmament machinery—the Disarmament Commission, the General Assembly's First Committee, and the Conference on Disarmament—to encourage them to overcome past difficulties and to fulfil their historic mandates in the establishment and maintenance of multilateral norms. He has also addressed and met personally with his 15-member Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters.

On 24 October 2008, however, the Secretary-General spoke to a meeting at the United Nations of the EastWest Institute and presented his five-point proposal for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. This was the most comprehensive nuclear disarmament proposal offered by a Secretary-General in the history of the organization. Later, in August 2010, he became the first Secretary-General to address the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony and to visit Nagasaki.

In introducing his five-point proposal, the Secretary-General began by emphasizing that a “world free of nuclear weapons would be a global public good of the highest order”. Such goals are not achieved by single states, however powerful. They require extensive multilateral cooperation among all States. And this cooperation was essential because of what he called the “unique dangers” associated with nuclear weapons, especially their indiscriminate effects, their impact on the environment, and their profound implications for regional and global security.

He noted that the world has long had a kind of “taboo” against the use of nuclear weapons, but questioned whether this particular taboo would be sufficient to prevent another future use of a nuclear weapon, whether intentionally, or by accident or miscalculation.

He recognized that the most fundamental decisions concerning nuclear weapons are made by States. Yet he also noted that the United Nations—both the Secretariat and its collective Member States—has its own contributions to make to this great cause, by providing a central forum where States can meet and agree on norms to advance their common interests.

He acknowledged that States have acquired these weapons because of various benefits they appeared to offer—for example, in serving as a means to deter nuclear attacks by other States, or to advance a country’s status or prestige. He referred to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as “contagious” precisely because of the fact that if one country or group of countries heralds such weapons as vital or indispensable to their security, it becomes difficult indeed to deny other countries the right to defend their own security interests in the same manner.

He then pointed to the high costs of developing and maintaining nuclear weapons arsenals—which have been credibly estimated in the trillions of dollars—as yet another reason for action in eliminating such weapons. He noted this “huge investment in financial and technical resources that could have had many other productive uses” in meeting compelling social and economic needs. And I am sure we can all think of many more productive uses of these resources in helping our fellow citizens.

Others, of course, have made detailed nuclear disarmament proposals. The WMD Commission chaired by Hans Blix and the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament—which was co-chaired by Gareth Evans of Australia and Yoriko Kawaguchi of Japan—were two important examples cited by the Secretary-General, as were additional efforts by coalitions of states in the United Nations and many other proposals from civil society.

The Secretary-General welcomed such initiatives and added that he had his own ideas to offer that might help in moving the global nuclear disarmament agenda forward. His early predecessor Trygve Lie used to say that it was the role of the Secretary-General to be “the spokesman for the world interest” and this is very much the spirit in which the five-point nuclear disarmament proposal was presented in 2008.

His first point focused on the importance of pursuing negotiations in good faith on disarmament, as have long been required under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. He specifically called for the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention, or alternatively, a

framework of separate mutually-reinforcing instruments with the same goal. He repeatedly stressed the importance of having a strong system of verification, and said that a draft model nuclear weapons convention, which had been circulated by the Secretary-General to all Member States upon request by the governments of Costa Rica and Malaysia, offered a good point of departure for such a treaty. He urged the nuclear-weapon States actively to engage on this issue at the Conference on Disarmament, and encouraged the two States with the largest nuclear arsenals—the Russian Federation and the United States—to resume bilateral negotiations aimed at deep and verifiable reductions of their arsenals. In April 2010, both countries signed the New START Treaty, which lowers the number of strategic offensive nuclear weapons that each State may deploy.

I would like at this point to note that the Secretary-General has received strong support, both for his entire proposal, but specifically for this first component of it dealing with the negotiation of nuclear disarmament with a view to establishing legally binding results. This proposal was supported by the Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, by a recent World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, by the 4,000 member Mayors for Peace organization, and by countless Member States in the General Assembly and at the May 2010 NPT Review Conference, which took official note of that proposal. Let me say that I am very pleased with the support that the Government of Uruguay has also given to this proposal, as seen in its efforts to promote these ideas in the United Nations disarmament machinery.

The second part of his five-point proposal concerned the Security Council, which under the Charter has a mandate to develop disarmament proposals—a mandate it has not actively pursued since the early postwar years. He called upon the Council to commence discussions on security issues in the nuclear disarmament process. He urged the Council to consider the possibility of developing unambiguous security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States against future nuclear attacks or threats of attack. In addition, he called on the Council to convene a summit on nuclear disarmament, while also inviting the non-NPT states to freeze their own nuclear-weapon capabilities and make their own disarmament commitments.

With respect to this second part of his five-point proposal, we should recall that the Security Council held a summit meeting on 24 September 2009, which resulted in the adoption of Resolution 1887. That resolution, while focusing primarily on non-proliferation and counter-terrorism, also called upon all NPT parties to undertake good faith negotiations as required by Article VI of the Treaty relating to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. In addition, the resolution called on all non-NPT states to join in this endeavour. This explicit call by the Council upon all States to pursue negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament is exactly what the Secretary-General has been calling for. As for security assurances, I note that some nuclear-weapon States have recently modified their negative security assurances, to clarify that these apply to non-nuclear-weapon States that are in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations.

The third element of his proposal concerned several actions to strengthen the rule of law in disarmament. This included entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, negotiation of a fissile material treaty, early entry into force of the treaties establishing regional nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and in Central Asia, ratification of all the protocols to all

the treaties establishing such zones, pursuit of the establishment of a regional nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and a call on all NPT States to conclude their safeguards agreements with the IAEA as required by the Treaty and to accept voluntarily strengthened safeguards under the Additional Protocol.

There is clearly much that remains to be done in these areas above, though the world did welcome last year the entry into force of African and Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. With respect to strengthening the rule of law in disarmament, I am pleased to report that the Secretary-General personally chaired a High-Level Meeting on 24 September this year to revitalize the Conference on Disarmament, with the aim of implementing a substantive programme of work, including negotiations on fissile material treaty.

Also relating to this third element of his proposal, the 2010 NPT Review Conference established mandates for the Secretary-General and the three sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East to convene a conference on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction in 2012, to appoint a facilitator for this purpose, and to select a venue for such a conference. This is the first concrete action to implement the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East and it is a welcome development indeed. With respect to the various protocols, I note that the United States announced at the 2010 NPT Review Conference that it will seek the Senate's advice and consent to ratify the protocols to the Pelindaba and Rarotonga Treaties. The protocols to the Semipalatinsk and Bangkok treaties, however, remain un-ratified by any of the nuclear-weapon States, though they have indicated their readiness to enter into consultations on these issues.

The fourth element of the Secretary-General's proposal concerns specific measures to improve accountability and transparency in the disarmament process. He invited the nuclear-weapon States to send to the UN Secretariat descriptions of what specifically they have been doing to implement their nuclear disarmament commitments, and said that the Secretariat in turn can take steps to encourage its wider dissemination. He also urged these States to expand the amount of information they have provided on their arsenals and stocks of fissile material.

Fortunately, some nuclear-weapon States have indeed expanded the amount of information they have made public about their arsenals since October 2008. The United States officially disclosed the size of its nuclear arsenal at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and additional details have also been provided by the Governments of France, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom. China has been reluctant to expand the transparency of its own arsenal until the States with the largest weapons holdings engage in deeper reductions. The Office for Disarmament Affairs in the UN Secretariat is currently in the process of developing a repository on its web site for data voluntarily submitted by the nuclear-weapon States documenting their respective nuclear disarmament efforts.

I would like to note here that the States Parties to the NPT, at their 2010 Review Conference, invited the Secretary-General to establish this publicly accessible repository, a mandate included in Action 21 of the Review Conference's recommendations. This mandate also encouraged the nuclear-weapon States to agree on a standardized form for reporting this

information and to agree on reporting intervals. France has announced that it will host a meeting of these States in Paris next spring to follow-up on the Review Conference's recommendations.

The final component of the Secretary-General's five-point proposal concerns several complementary measures. These include the elimination of other types of weapons of mass destruction, new efforts against WMD terrorism, limits in the production and trade in conventional arms, and new weapons bans, including of missiles and space weapons. He also called on the General Assembly to convene a "world summit on disarmament, non-proliferation, and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction," as originally proposed by the Blix Commission.

This last set of proposals is every bit as important as the rest, because it reflects the longstanding recognition at the United Nations that WMD disarmament and conventional arms regulation must go hand in hand. The idea here is what it has always been: to strengthen international peace and security, not to eliminate only one type of weapon so that unconstrained wars can take place with other weapons. Efforts to improve non-proliferation controls and the physical security of nuclear materials took a step forward with the April 2009 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington. The General Assembly held a thematic debate on disarmament issues on 19 April 2010. And in 2012, the UN will also host a major international conference that will hopefully result in the conclusion of the long-sought Arms Trade Treaty.

So this in summary is the Secretary-General's five-point nuclear disarmament proposal. It recognizes the serious dangers posed by the proliferation or possible terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons, but makes it clear that the best and most effective way to confront those challenges is through real progress in achieving global nuclear disarmament. The Secretary-General is trying to help the world community to move toward a taboo not just on the use, proliferation, or terrorist acquisition of nuclear weapons. He is trying to help the world to develop a taboo—in the form of a legal prohibition—on the very existence of such weapons, for only then can these other nuclear threats be reliably confronted.

If he continues to receive strong support from the international diplomatic community and from civil society, the Secretary-General may well be able to do more to advance his determined goal—to move disarmament from the domain of words into the reality of concrete accomplishments. I invite all here today to join in this great cause.