

**Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters
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Opening Remarks

By

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I am very pleased to have this opportunity to welcome all members to this 55th Session of the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. I wish first of all to express my deep appreciation to Ambassador Carlo Trezza for his many contributions as Chairperson of this Board last year, and also to congratulate Professor Olga Pellicer for agreeing to serve as his successor. As always, the Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to assist the new Chairperson and all members of this Board throughout your deliberations.

I also wish to welcome your new member, Ambassador Marcie Ries, who will have the challenging job of replacing Ambassador Don Mahley, whose valuable contributions to the work of this Board were welcomed by all.

We are meeting today in an international environment that has changed considerably in recent years. In some respects, these changes are happening even on a monthly basis, as we have seen from recent developments in the Middle East. We are witnessing an outpouring of demands for greater progress in disarmament, and specifically for greater multilateral cooperation in this field. We are seeing efforts to bring democracy to disarmament, as seen both in the rise of civil society initiatives and in the growing number and diversity of States that are taking an active interest in this issue. And we are confronting a growing recognition worldwide of the need to bring the "rule of law" to disarmament, through such steps as negotiating new treaties, bringing existing treaties closer to universal membership, and ensuring full compliance.

At the heart of this collective effort lies the UN disarmament machinery, a set of distinct but closely related institutions dedicated to the establishment of global norms in this field, including—the purely deliberative work of the UN Disarmament Commission; the consideration and adoption of resolutions by the General Assembly's First Committee; the negotiation of multilateral treaties in the Conference on Disarmament; and the deliberations at specific UN diplomatic conferences open to all.

This Advisory Board is itself a valued part of this machinery and its role is reinforced by its two greatest assets—namely, its independence and its ability to conduct its work on an informal, confidential basis. Its members serve in their individual capacities and are not expected to represent specific national policies, and this offers the potential for avoiding the duplication of political divisions found elsewhere in the machinery. As a result, the Board can offer some fresh thinking

about disarmament issues, and I know that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon values your advice, especially on the weighty subject on your agenda this year, encompassing the twin challenges of overcoming the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and of revitalizing the wider process of multilateral cooperation in disarmament.

Over a decade ago, Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that “much of the established multilateral disarmament machinery has started to rust.” Today, this accumulation of rust has reached the point where the very survival of this machinery may well be in jeopardy. Many believe that it has lost its relevance and failed to respond to growing public demands for concrete progress in eliminating the world’s deadliest weapons and in regulating conventional armaments.

There is certainly a sharp contrast between the deadlock at the Conference on Disarmament and more positive developments occurring elsewhere. After a long drought in disarmament, the planting of even a few seeds is most welcome indeed, despite the hardships of cultivation that lie ahead.

For example, the Russian Federation and the United States signed the new START treaty last April, and the US Senate voted to ratify it in December. Its entry into force this month has opened the door for further progress, which Presidents Obama and Medvedev have pledged to pursue in the years ahead— going beyond limitations in deployments to address reductions of arsenals and the verified destruction of warheads. This future progress will not be easy, however, especially given conditions adopted during in the ratification process in both countries on modernization.

Last April, concerns over the threats from nuclear weapons proliferation and terrorism inspired the convening of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, which highlighted the need for strict controls over the production, disposition and use of fissile materials.

On 19 April, the General Assembly held a special thematic debate on disarmament, which followed the Security Council’s summit on disarmament, held in September 2009.

The highlight from last May was of course the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which produced a consensus Final Document identifying 64 Actions to advance the treaty’s goals in disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear

energy, and additional Actions to pursue the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East.

On 29 August, the world marked the first International Day against Nuclear Tests, reminding us all of the need to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force.

And of course the 24 September High Level Meeting provided an opportunity for a full airing of views on “revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations”. The Secretary-General’s “Chairman’s Summary” offered four suggested actions—(a) commencement of substantive work in the CD based on the consensus 2009 programme of work or any similar proposal submitted in 2010; (b) placement on the agenda of the 65th session of the General Assembly of an item on follow-up to the High Level Meeting; (c) consultation with the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters concerning all the issues raised at that Meeting, including *inter alia* the possible establishment of a High-level Panel of Eminent Persons with a special focus on the CD; and (d) submission of a report by the Secretary-General on this Meeting and on follow-up actions, to the first meeting next year of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

There were of course many other positive developments last year that help to set the wider context for the Board’s current deliberations—including several seeds planted by the Secretary-General himself, well beyond his convening of the High Level Meeting.

On 26 February last year, he sent a letter to the parliaments of the world urging support for further efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament—and in July, the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament adopted a Declaration commending the Secretary-General’s five-point nuclear disarmament proposal, following earlier support from the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

On 6 April, he visited the nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk and later that month published an op-ed—“A New Ground Zero”—on the UN and disarmament.

In May, he opened the 2010 NPT Review Conference, circulated a letter urging a successful outcome, and issued a statement welcoming that outcome when it was achieved.

In August, he became the first UN Secretary-General to participate in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony and to visit Nagasaki.

And last January, he visited the Conference on Disarmament to make another personal appeal for that body to live up to its solemn responsibilities as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. He stated that disarmament and non-proliferation were among his "top priorities" for the year ahead, and that he is seeking the counsel of his Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters on measures to follow-up on the High Level Meeting.

Since the Board will hold its next session in Geneva from 29 June until 1 July, I believe this would be a good opportunity for the Board to discuss this issue with the members of the CD.

Despite the focused nature of the Board's agenda this year, however, I would like to note that 2010 was also a year for some welcome progress in the field of conventional arms.

With respect to curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the Fourth Biennial Meeting of States took place in June and participants succeeded in adopting an outcome document by consensus. And I am very pleased to report that the Kinshasa Convention to limit the illicit trade of such weapons in Central Africa was opened for signature last November, thus contributing to the advancement of the UN disarmament and non-proliferation agenda in that region.

In July, the first Preparatory Committee met for the 2012 UN conference on the Arms Trade Treaty—a very important multilateral initiative in the field of conventional arms. And in August, the Convention on Cluster Munitions entered into force.

Yet it is also true that, according to SIPRI, global military expenditures rose to over \$1.5 trillion in 2009. And there is also a need for more States to make use of two key UN transparency instruments—namely, the UN Register of Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures.

Against this elaborate tapestry of events and processes, the Board is facing a difficult challenge of responding to the Secretary-General's request for your counsel

on measures to overcome the stalemate in the CD and revitalize multilateral disarmament efforts.

You are certainly facing no lack of advice from Member States and civil society on what must be done. At the CD, the General Assembly, and the High Level Meeting, several measures have been prescribed to address these challenges, including the following, to name just a few:

- Convene a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on Disarmament
- Adopt CD/1864 as the basis for a Programme of Work in 2011
- Modify or clarify the consensus rule
- Adopt a simplified Programme of Work listing core issues without mandates
- Adopt a “comprehensive and balanced” Programme of Work
- Bring the issue of the CD’s stalemate to the General Assembly
- Start negotiations on a fissile material treaty, either inside or outside the CD
- Commence an informal process before negotiations on a fissile material treaty
- Consider alternative processes outside the CD for issues on its agenda
- Review or expand the membership of the CD
- Reform the CD’s procedures to open participation more to civil society
- Dismantle regional groupings in the CD
- Adopt deadlines for the commencement of negotiations in the CD
- Reconsider the budget for the CD, if the impasse continues
- Establish a high-level Panel of Eminent Persons, with a special focus on the CD

On this last proposal, which has been supported by some delegations in recent months, several questions logically arise concerning the size and composition of such a panel, its funding, the scope of its mandate, its desired products, its schedule for completing its work, and its likely “value added” relative to the various other proposals that have been offered.

The long list of actions I have just surveyed contains many that focus just on the CD, given its special role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. Yet this list is by no means comprehensive, either as a summary of CD reforms, or as a compendium of actions that could be taken on the broader issue addressed at the High Level Meeting of “taking forward multilateral disarmament

negotiations.” It is intended here merely to illustrate the variety of proposals that have been made and to help identify some specific issues for your deliberations.

I would like to conclude my remarks today on a personal note.

I know that the work ahead for the Board will not be easy, and that its work this year is especially complex, with credible practical solutions having eluded some of the world’s foremost diplomats and disarmament experts. Whenever I have confronted such challenges, I have found it helpful to recall a fundamental truth about multilateral approaches to disarmament.

The great strength of multilateralism in this field, relative to its alternatives, lies in its legitimacy—in a double sense. First, the norms advanced in such a process are substantively *fair*, in that they do not involve double standards or special benefits for the few. Second, the *process* of developing such norms—if they are truly to gain universal respect—must be open to the widest possible participation, and not dictated from the few to the many. It is easy to criticize the time-consuming and cumbersome processes of multilateral disarmament efforts, but these should be weighed against the many benefits that a truly legitimate set of multilateral disarmament norms offers. What takes longer, might well prove most sustainable.

Much of course can be achieved through enlightened unilateral, bilateral, and plurilateral initiatives, if their net effects are unequivocally related to disarmament. Both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of such initiatives will depend upon the extent that future negotiations will remain focused on achieving the common interest, rather than parochial national gains.

We must not let disarmament become a process without a purpose. We must not let various steps and halfway measures become ends in themselves. We must continually assess such steps relative to the ends we have all agreed to pursue together, and insist upon maintaining that linkage. And we must not engage in an endless exercise of setting “preconditions” for disarmament.

This year, the Advisory Board will be conducting its deliberations to the sound of a ticking clock. Hopefully, many of the seeds that have been sown over the course of last year will soon be germinating and reaching full bloom by the time the next General Assembly meets in the fall. I am confident that this Board is well equipped to fulfil its responsibilities, and I wish you well in the work that lies ahead.