

**Opening Remarks**

**Launching the Nuclear Abolition Forum**

By

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It is a great privilege for me to have this opportunity to participate in the launching of a new periodical and website – the Nuclear Abolition Forum.

During my service as the UN's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs—as indeed throughout my diplomatic career—I have become more and more convinced of the vital role of civil society in achieving great multilateral goals, and I must admit, I view disarmament as one of the greatest.

The advocacy efforts by civil society play a crucial role in sustaining the political will necessary to achieve concrete progress in this field. Individuals and groups contribute to a wider process of ensuring accountability for the performance of disarmament commitments. They help in educating both the general public and government officials. And they provide opportunities for dialogue and debate among people with at times widely different perspectives on how the challenges of disarmament can most effectively and efficiently be met.

So I look upon the Nuclear Abolition Forum as fully consistent with this noble tradition of active civil society engagement in the unfolding global process of moving the world to a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons adaptable to mass destruction—a goal that appeared in the UN General Assembly's first resolution in January 1946.

It is highly appropriate that the inaugural issue of this periodical would focus on the application of international humanitarian law (IHL) to nuclear weapons. Victor Hugo once wrote that “You can resist an invading army; you cannot resist an idea whose time has come”—and IHL surely represents one of those ideas. While it has been long in the making—over several centuries in fact—IHL is increasingly a focus of deliberations in multilateral arenas dealing with disarmament.

This was certainly apparent at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, but it is also a recurring theme of statements made in all the key institutions of the UN disarmament machinery. There is underway today a new awareness of the importance of binding legal commitments in advancing disarmament goals. I believe we are witnessing today a new, unfolding process of bringing the rule of law to disarmament, and both IHL and multilateral disarmament conventions will have many indispensable contributions to make in this great cause.

I very much welcome the emphasis placed by the architects of the Nuclear Abolition Forum in rekindling and sustaining a dialogue over fundamental questions relating to the achievement of nuclear disarmament. While there are roughly 12 arguments that have repeatedly been invoked and recycled over many decades against nuclear disarmament, this Forum offers a superb opportunity for abolition advocates to challenge such glib assertions and expose their weaknesses, while affirming the concrete positive advantages of disarmament.

For this reason alone, I warmly welcome the launching of the Nuclear Abolition Forum and wish all who share its goals well in the years ahead. I commend it not just to all who already support abolition, but to all who still have an open mind to learning about what it has to offer, which is considerable. Congratulations to all on Day One of the Nuclear Abolition Forum.