

Opening Remarks

**Panel on “Towards Accountability of States for Eliminating Nuclear Weapons”
Conference on Nuclear Disarmament: A Compass Point for Progress and Accountability**

By

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By any measure, the adoption by the 2010 NPT Review Conference of a 64-point action plan marked a significant milestone in the history of the Treaty, as did the adoption of the initiative to convene a conference in 2012 to implement the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. Of these 64 points, 22 dealt specifically with eliminating nuclear weapons.

Disarmament, of course, has long been one of the fundamental pillars of the NPT. Reflecting this priority, disarmament figured prominently in the “package deal” that enabled the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995, and the 2000 NPT Review Conference was able to reach a consensus on “thirteen steps” to advance this goal.

Yet disarmament was not born with the NPT. It appears twice in the UN Charter and nuclear disarmament was specifically identified as a goal in the first resolution of the General Assembly. It has since been the subject of literally hundreds of General Assembly resolutions.

So when it comes to nuclear disarmament, the challenge is not simply to reaffirm the goal, or to re-frame that goal as some distant vision or dream. The challenge instead is to match the solemn words of disarmament with concrete deeds.

Accountability—the theme of this panel—refers to the process whereby the world community is able to examine those deeds and assess their sufficiency and effectiveness in achieving agreed disarmament goals. The term derives from the word “accountable,” which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “Liable to be called to account, or to answer for responsibilities and conduct.” This is one of the shortest definitions I have seen of the most basic purpose of the NPT review process, and of additional initiatives by governments and civil society to assess progress in achieving disarmament.

The importance of accountability cannot be overstated. Accountability helps to establish and maintain the legitimacy of a treaty, and of commitments made in multilateral arenas. Benjamin Disraeli put it this way: “I repeat ... that all power is a trust—that we are accountable for its exercise—that, from the people, and for the people, all springs, and all must exist.”

We are fortunate indeed to have on this panel three speakers who know something about both accountability and disarmament.

Ambassador Richard Butler is Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative and one of the world’s leading authorities as a practitioner and thinker about nuclear disarmament and arms control.

Dr. Jianqun Teng is Director of the Center for Arms Control and International Security Studies, at the China Institute of International Studies—he brings to this table his extensive experience both as a former military officer and as a scholar.

Dr. William Potter is Director of the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies, where he also serves as Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar Professor—Dr. Potter is one of the world leaders in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education, one of the most important roles of all when it comes to ensuring that the next generation will understand the importance of accountability when it comes to fulfilling nuclear weapons commitments.

I welcome them all here today.