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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO THE 58TH PUGWASH CONFERENCE
ON SCIENCE AND WORLD AFFAIRS
The Hague, 17 April 2009

Delivered by Mr. Sergio Duarte, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

I am pleased to send greetings to the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs. In our troubled world, where some scientific advances have improved our quality of life but others have produced horrifically destructive weapons, Pugwash's ongoing efforts to promote scientific contributions to humanity are invaluable.

I especially appreciate your longstanding efforts to warn the world against the catastrophic threat posed to humanity by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Pugwash's work for progress in nuclear disarmament has even greater resonance today, as more and more people recognize the hazards of nuclear weapons and their irrelevance in addressing contemporary security challenges, such as terrorism and intra-state warfare. Enlightened leaders, former high officials and statesmen, and civil society groups around the world have been offering initiatives to achieve progress in this realm.

Against this backdrop, I congratulate Pugwash President Jayantha Dhanapala and the organizers for the Nuclear Weapons Symposium that is part of this year's conference. Your members have a uniquely authoritative and passionate stance, and their contributions will no doubt help advance our work in this area.

For my part, I have discussed disarmament and non-proliferation with top leaders in key countries, including the Russian Federation and the United States. Earlier this month, I welcomed the commitment by President Medvedev and President Obama to fulfil their disarmament obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to rapidly pursue new and verifiable reductions in their strategic offensive arsenals by replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with a new, legally-binding treaty.

I am also encouraged by their efforts to overcome differences related to the deployment of missile defenses. And I welcome their commitment to further strengthen the NPT and the international regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As depository of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty, I am particularly pleased at President Obama's commitment to work for U.S. ratification of the Treaty.

But the nuclear powers must go further, and make the most of next year's NPT Review Conference. I have called for negotiations on a fissile material treaty to begin in a year or two. And we must undertake new efforts to limit conventional weapons and strengthen our protections against the proliferation of WMD.

There are many significant challenges on the road to achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world, including several that have scientific dimensions, such as verification, the disposition of fissile material from dismantled weapons, measures to prevent the further development of weapons, and improvements in physical security. The Pugwash Conference has a critical role to play in meeting these challenges, I offer my best wishes for the success of your gathering, and look forward to learning about its results.