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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

AS DELIVERED

REMARKS TO THE THIRD SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE
FOR THE 2010 NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE

New York, 4 May 2009

Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the United Nations as we open this important third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

For too long, the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda has been stagnating in a Cold War mentality.

In 2005, the world experienced what might be called a disarmament depression. The NPT Review Conference that year ended in disappointment. The UN World Summit outcome contained not even a single line on weapons of mass destruction.

Today, we seem to be emerging from that low point. The change has come in recent weeks. But it is unfolding against a backdrop of multiple threats that, while urgent, tend to obscure the urgency of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

The global economic crisis, climate change and the outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus are all reminders that we live in an interdependent world. They demand a full and forceful multilateral response.

At the same time, nuclear weapons remain an apocalyptic threat. We cannot afford to place disarmament and non-proliferation on a backburner. Let us not be lulled into complacency. Let us not miss the opportunity to make our societies safer and more prosperous.

Excellencies,

I have been using every opportunity to push for progress. I discussed non-proliferation and disarmament with Russian President Medvedev and U.S. President Obama. I welcome the joint commitment they announced last month to fulfill their obligations under article VI of the NPT.

I am particularly encouraged that both countries are committed to rapidly pursuing verifiable reductions in their strategic offensive arsenals by replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with a new, legally-binding pact. I hope their example will serve as a catalyst in inspiring other nuclear powers to follow suit.

Other developments also merit attention.

On Iran, I encourage the country's leaders to continue their cooperation with the IAEA with a view to demonstrating the entirely peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

I also encourage them to re-engage in the negotiating process with the

EU 3+3 and the EU High Representative on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, and in line with the package of proposals for cooperation with Iran.

With respect to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite the current serious challenges, I continue to believe that the Six-Party process is the best mechanism to achieve the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner.

I therefore urge the DPRK to return to these talks so that everybody can resolve their respective concerns through dialogue and cooperation, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions as well as multilateral and bilateral agreements.

I also urge all states to end the stalemate that has marked the international disarmament machinery for too long. To strengthen the NPT regime, it is essential that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty enters into force without further delay, and that the Conference on Disarmament begins negotiations on a verifiable fissile material treaty. I commend President Obama's commitment to ratify the CTBT, and urge all countries that have not done so to ratify the Treaty without conditions.

Hopes for a breakthrough on the deadlocked disarmament agenda have been building. We have seen a cascade of proposals. Elder statesmen, leaders of nuclear-weapon states, regional groups, various commissions and civil society representatives have elaborated proposals for slaying the nuclear monster.

Their voices may be varied, but they are all part of the same rising chorus demanding action on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Concerns about nuclear terrorism, a new rush by some to possess nuclear arms, and renewed interest in nuclear power as an alternative to fossil fuels have only heightened the need for urgent action.

Excellencies,

The work you do in the next two weeks will be critical. You must seize the moment and show your seriousness.

This preparatory session must generate agreements on key procedural issues and substantive recommendations to the Review Conference.

The Review Conference must produce a clear commitment by all NPT states parties to comply fully with all of their obligations under this vital Treaty.

I urge you to work in a spirit of compromise and flexibility. I hope you will avoid taking absolute positions that have no chance of generating consensus. Instead, build bridges, and be part of a new multilateralism.

People understand intuitively that nuclear weapons will never make us more secure.

They know that real security lies in responding to poverty, climate change, armed conflict and instability.

They want governments to invest in plans for growth and development, not weapons of mass destruction.

If you can set us on a course towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world, you will send a message of hope to the world.

We desperately need this message at this time. I am counting on you, and I am supporting all of your efforts to succeed, now and at the Review Conference in 2010.

Thank you.