



**Launch of the UNODA Occasional Paper 28:
“Rethinking General and Complete Disarmament in the
21st Century”**

Remarks by Mr. KIM Won-soo

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs



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His Excellency, Mr. Alfredo Labbe

Her Excellency, Ms. Milena Pires

His Excellency, Mr. Juan Sandoval

Dr. Dan Plesch

[Mr. Kanat Tumysh]

Reverend Monseigneur Simon Kassas and Dr. Pierce Corden

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for your presence here today for this event to launch UNODA Occasional Paper number 28, entitled “Rethinking General and Complete Disarmament in the 21st Century”. I express my sincere appreciation to the Permanent Missions of Chile and Timor-Leste for organizing this event.

I also wish to pay tribute to Dr. Dan Plesch and his team at SOAS University of London, who were the driving force behind the publication. For many years, Dr. Plesch has been the world’s leading academic voice on general and complete disarmament. Through his project known as SCRAP, which stands for “Strategic Concept for Removal of Arms and Proliferation”, he has engaged dozens of students on the need to find new ways to move the disarmament agenda forward.

I also wish to acknowledge the presence here today of a number of individuals who authored chapters in the publication, and to express my appreciation for their contribution.

I want to recognize in particular Dr. Randy Rydell who was a tireless champion for this cause in his decade and half at the United Nations and who remains closely engaged even in his retirement. The publication therefore also preserves a small part of his vast institutional memory for the future. I sincerely thank him for his indomitable spirit and for his service.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

General and complete disarmament has remained the ultimate objective of the United Nations in the field of disarmament for nearly four decades. In the early decades of the Organization, the United States and Soviet Union led serious negotiations aimed at achieving simultaneous progress in both the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and in the comprehensive limitation and control of conventional arms.

Yet today, this “ultimate strategic goal” is often dismissed as a utopian fantasy, or at best a distant dream. However, I believe that the concept of general and complete disarmament,

(GCD), is more important and more relevant than ever before and points the way to the future for three reasons.

First, the concept of GCD embraces the growing interconnectedness between strategic weapons and emerging technologies. It is difficult to imagine how we can expect to make progress in nuclear disarmament without coming to grips with issues like missile defense, the weaponization of outer space, cyber warfare and hypersonic weapons.

Similarly, our collective failure to restrain military budgets has resulted in a blank cheque for the continuous development and deployment of destabilizing new technologies. This is often taking place without due regard to their impact on peace, stability and respect for international humanitarian law.

These factors have resulted in a dangerous over-accumulation of arms in many regions, which has eroded trust and fuelled conflict. The failure to acknowledge these interconnections has stymied disarmament negotiations for the past two decades.

In moving forward, I believe we all need to build strong coalitions with the humanitarian, human rights and development communities, to promote disarmament as a means to help accomplish the broader objectives of the United Nations, especially the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Second, revitalizing GCD could give governments a means to break the current impasse.

Some consider that international security conditions today are not ripe for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and arms control. When the Secretary-General spoke earlier this month in Reykjavik to commemorate the historic 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev Summit, he called this view “completely backwards”.

He went on to say, [Quote] “The pursuit of arms control and disarmament is precisely how we can break the tension and reduce conflicts. ... Taken together, [various] efforts would help create the conditions for ending regional disputes, resolving conflicts in many parts of the world and facilitating the elimination of nuclear weapons.” [Unquote]

As the publication recognizes, the Security Council has never lived up to its responsibility under Article 26 to formulate a plan for regulation of arms. Therefore, I support the call for the Council to take this up as an urgent imperative. It could start with an open debate in 2017 on the contribution of GCD to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Third, the pursuit of GCD could bring back unity and inclusiveness at a time when the international community is more divided than ever on the future of disarmament.

When it was first proposed, GCD unified the entire international community at the time when the Cold War was entering its most dangerous phase. The first resolution adopted by the General Assembly on GCD was also the first time that the entire membership of the United Nations had ever co-sponsored a resolution.

That is why I believe it remains important for us to focus on what unites us and not on what divides us. Ultimately, we will only be able to reach our ultimate destination if we all arrive there together.

While we all must remain unwavering in shining a spotlight on the unacceptable nature of nuclear weapons on moral and humanitarian grounds, we must also ensure that any path pursued is inclusive and truly takes us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Reykjavik, the Secretary-General observed that, [Quote] “the end of the Cold War brought a rare moment of acceptance that security could be achieved through mutual restraint and the rule of law. That common vision for international peace and security must be restored. This effort must encompass not only ridding the world of nuclear weapons, but making progress in conventional arms control and runaway military spending. The world is over-armed but peace is underfunded.” [Unquote]

I sincerely hope the UNODA occasional paper serves as a catalyst for new ideas on how we can resume progress toward a more peaceful and demilitarized world.

Thank you.