

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

ADDRESS TO THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY REVIEW CONFERENCE

New York, 2 May 2005

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1945, the year that the United Nations was founded, our world entered the nuclear age with the horrific explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Soon after, the Cold War was upon us, and the threat of nuclear annihilation hung over humankind. That dangerous epoch may have ended, but nuclear threats remain. Indeed, in the five years since you last met, the world has reawakened to nuclear dangers, both new and old.

I firmly believe that our generation can build a world of ever-expanding development, security and human rights – a world "in larger freedom". But I am equally aware that such a world could be put irrevocably beyond our reach by a nuclear catastrophe in one of our great cities.

In the chaos and confusion of the immediate aftermath, there might be many questions. Was this an act of terrorism? Was it an act of aggression by a state? Was it an accident? These may not be equally probable, but all are possible.

Imagine, just for a minute, what the consequences would be. Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people would perish in an instant, and many more would die from exposure to radiation.

The global impact would also be grave. The attention of world leaders would be riveted on this existential threat. Carefully nurtured collective security mechanisms could be discredited. Hard-won freedoms and human rights could be compromised.

The sharing of nuclear technology for peaceful uses could halt. Resources for development would likely dwindle. And world financial markets, trade and transportation could be hard hit, with major economic consequences. This could drive millions of people in poor countries into deeper deprivation and suffering.

As shock gave way to anger and despair, the leaders of every nation represented here at this conference - as well as those who are not here - would have to ask: How did it come to this? Is my conscience clear? Could I have done more to reduce the risk by strengthening the regime designed to do so?

In our interconnected world, a threat to one is a threat to all, and we all share responsibility for each other's security. If this is true of all threats, it is particularly true of the nuclear threat.

We are all vulnerable to the weakest link in nuclear security and safety and in our efforts to promote disarmament and prevent proliferation. And we all bear a heavy responsibility to build an efficient, effective, and equitable system that reduces nuclear threats.

Thirty five years ago, our forebears found the wisdom to agree to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to prevent proliferation and advance disarmament while assuring the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Ever since, it has been a cornerstone of global security, and has confounded the dire predictions of its critics.

Nuclear weapons have not spread to dozens of States. Indeed, more States have given up their ambitions for nuclear weapons than have acquired them. States have joined nuclear-weapon-free-zones, and I welcome recent progress to establish a new one in Central Asia. The global non-proliferation norm has been firmly established — and it has been reaffirmed in your last two review conferences.

A watchful eye has been kept on the supply of materials necessary to make [nuclear weapons]. Many States have been able to enjoy the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

We have also seen steps, such as the recent Moscow Treaty, to dismantle weapons and reduce stockpiles.

Important multilateral action has also been taken to reduce the risk of nuclear terrorism. In resolution 1540, the Security Council has affirmed the responsibility of all states to secure sensitive materials and control their export. And I am sure you take heart, as I do, from the decision of the General Assembly, last month, to adopt the Convention on Nuclear Terrorism.

But we cannot afford to be complacent. The plain fact is that the regime has not kept pace with the march of technology and globalization, and developments of many kinds in recent years have placed it under great stress.

International regimes do not fail because of one breach, however serious or unacceptable. They fail when many breaches pile one on top of the other, to the point where the gap between promise and performance becomes unbridgeable. As you meet to review the NPT, your urgent task is to narrow that gap.

Excellencies,

I have no doubt that we will hear many truths about this conference.

Some will stress the need to prevent proliferation to the most volatile regions. Others will argue that we must make compliance with, and enforcement of, the NPT universal.

Some will say that the spread of nuclear fuel cycle technology poses an unacceptable proliferation threat. Others will counter that access to peaceful uses of nuclear technology must not be compromised.

Some will paint proliferation as a grave threat. Others will argue that existing nuclear arsenals are a deadly danger.

But I challenge each of you to recognize all these truths. I challenge you to accept that disarmament, non-proliferation and the right to peaceful uses are all vital. I challenge you to agree that they are all too important to be held hostage to the politics of the past. And I challenge you to acknowledge that they all impose responsibilities on all States.

If you are to rise to these challenges, action is required on many fronts.

First, you must strengthen confidence in the integrity of the treaty, particularly in the face of the first withdrawal announced by a State. Unless violations are directly addressed, the most basic collective reassurance on which the treaty rests will be called into question.

Second, you must ensure that measures for compliance are made more effective, to maintain confidence that States are living up to their obligations. For example, universalization of the Model Additional Protocol is long overdue. It has to be made the new standard for verifying compliance.

Third, you must act to reduce the threat of proliferation not only to States, but to non-state actors. As the dangers of such proliferation have become clear, so has the universal obligation for all States to establish effective national controls and enforcement measures.

Fourth, you must come to grips with the Janus-like character of nuclear energy. The regime will not be sustainable if scores more States develop the most sensitive phases of the fuel cycle and are equipped with the technology to produce nuclear weapons on short notice – and, of course, each individual State which does this only will leave others to feel that they must do the same. This would increase all the risks – of nuclear accident, of trafficking, of terrorist use, and of use by states themselves.

To prevent that, you must find durable ways to reconcile the right to peaceful uses with the imperative of non-proliferation. States that wish to exercise their undoubted right to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes must not insist that they can only do so by developing capacities that might be used to create nuclear weapons. But, equally, those same States should not be left to feel that the only route to enjoying the benefits of nuclear energy is a domestic fuel cycle capability.

A first step must be to expedite agreement to create incentives for states to voluntarily forego the development of fuel cycle facilities. I commend the IAEA and its Director-General, Mohamed ElBaradei, for working to advance consensus on this vital question, and I urge all States to do the same.

Excellencies,

These steps would materially reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons. But, ultimately, the only guarantee that they will never be used is for our world to be free of such weapons.

If we are truly committed to a nuclear weapon free world, we must move beyond rhetorical flourish and political posturing, and start to think seriously how to get there.

Some of the initial steps are obvious. Prompt negotiation of a fissile material cutoff treaty for all states is vital and indispensable. All States should affirm their commitment to a moratorium on testing, and to early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. The High-Level Panel has also wisely endorsed the recommendation that *all* nuclear weapon states should de-alert their existing weapons, and give negative security assurances to the non-nuclear weapon States.

But you must go further. Many states still live under a nuclear umbrella, whether of their own or an ally. Ways must be found to lessen, and ultimately overcome, their reliance on nuclear deterrence.

An important step would be for former Cold War rivals to commit themselves - irreversibly - to further cuts in their arsenals, so that warheads number in the hundreds, not in the thousands. We can only hope to achieve such major reductions if every State has a clear and reliable picture of the fissile material holdings of every other State, and if every State is confident that this material in other States is secure.

The obligation therefore falls on all States – nuclear and non-nuclear alike – to increase transparency and security. Indeed, unless all States recognize that disarmament, like non-proliferation, requires action from everyone, the goal of general and complete disarmament will remain a distant dream.

We must, at the same time, take heed of the fact that the attitude of States to the NPT is unavoidably linked to broader questions of national, regional and global security. The more we work to resolve regional conflicts, the less incentives States will have to go nuclear. The more confidence States have in our collective security system, the more prepared they will be to rely on a strengthened non-proliferation regime, rather than on deterrence. And thus the nearer we will be to the vital goal of universal membership of the treaty.

In my report, "In larger freedom", I have offered Member States a vision of a revitalized system of collective security for the 21st century. When world leaders meet here in September, they must take bold decisions and bring that vision closer to reality.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an ambitious agenda. But the consequences of failure are too great to aim for anything less. At the same time, the promise of success is plain for all to see: a world of reduced nuclear threat, and, ultimately, a world free of nuclear weapons.

Our world will not come close to this vision if you accept only some of the truths that will be uttered during this conference. As custodians of the NPT, you must come to terms with all the nuclear dangers that threaten humanity.

Indeed, the detonations at Hiroshima and Nagasaki long ago made your burden abundantly clear. As J. Robert Oppenheimer, one of the fathers of the first bomb, warned: "The peoples of this world must unite, or they will perish...The atomic bomb has spelled {this] out for all men to understand."

Thank you very much.