



**Remarks at the Informal Meeting of  
the United Nations General Assembly to Mark  
the 2014 Observance of the International Day Against Nuclear Tests**

By

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I welcome this opportunity to join in commemorating this year's International Day against Nuclear Tests.

I am especially grateful to appear with our Panel's Moderator, Ambassador Joy Ogwu of Nigeria, who chaired the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters in 2006. She was the first African woman to serve in that position and we see by her presence today that she remains committed to advancing the cause of disarmament.

In another time and another place, Charles Dickens introduced us to the phrase "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times". While it is difficult to render this verdict on the current state of nuclear disarmament—in either sense—his theme of competing trends definitely applies.

We can see the best in the many dedicated efforts by Member States and groups from civil society to outlaw nuclear weapons and nuclear tests. We see a growing recognition worldwide of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and the basic incompatibility of such weapons with fundamental norms of international humanitarian and human rights laws, customary international law, and the timeless laws of morality. Nuclear disarmament has evolved far beyond the utopian dream so often cited by its critics. The demand for progress in this field has become a historical reality—a fact helping to define our times and this is very good news indeed. It is certainly something on which to build. The very fact that 183 States have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) testifies to the near universal belief that nuclear tests are anathema and must be outlawed globally.

Yet while we may not be facing the worst of all possible worlds—one embroiled in a nuclear war—we see all around us preparations to engage in such a war. We see that the Cold War doctrine of nuclear deterrence has remained deeply entrenched in the security policies of countries representing most of humanity, including both possessor states and members of nuclear alliances. We see well-funded, long-term plans underway to modernize nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, yet no government plans or negotiations for nuclear disarmament. We see that the CTBT has still not entered into force, eighteen years after it was opened for signature and no negotiations are underway on a fissile material treaty. Despite the instability we have been witnessing throughout the Middle East, we see continued difficulties in even convening a conference to consider the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We see that the hideous ideology of "might makes right" is jeopardizing the rule of law and international peace and security on both global and regional levels, and not just in the Middle East.

Surely one of the most vocal champions of the CTBT is our current Secretary-General. Fifteen years ago, he served as Chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization. And in his twin current capacities as Secretary-General and the treaty's Depositary, he has repeatedly called for the early entry into force of the treaty. In 2008, he went a step further and offered his five-point proposal for global nuclear disarmament, the first such plan offered by any Secretary-General. He completely understands how a nuclear test ban would contribute to that larger goal—delegitimizing tests can help in delegitimizing use, and it is not unreasonable to conclude that weapons that are illegitimate to use should be illegitimate to possess.

Yet despite the large membership in the CTBT, no advocate of this treaty can be content until it is ratified by the eight remaining States whose ratifications are required for the treaty to enter into force. I hope this International Day will provide an occasion for China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Pakistan, and the United States to reflect on the global benefits of this treaty and complete their processes of ratification.

While this year we are commemorating this International Day on 10 September, the official day was on August 29, which makes this month one of the most significant in the history of nuclear weapons. In this month in 1945, atomic bombs devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On this day in 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first atomic bomb. In this month in 1953, the Soviet Union tested its first hydrogen bomb. In this month in 1963, the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed. On this day in 1991, Kazakhstan closed the former Soviet nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk. And in this month in 1993, the Conference on Disarmament decided to commence negotiations of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

The reasons the international tide has shifted against nuclear tests are clear. Such tests poison the natural environment. They aggravate regional and international tensions and sow seeds of mistrust among nations and peoples. They contribute to nuclear arms races. They are a waste of financial and scientific resources. And they are completely inconsistent with the responsibility of all States to pursue negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament.

On this last point, I am reminded that someone once defined “fanaticism” as “redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim”.<sup>1</sup> To avoid this temptation when it comes to the subject of our meeting today, one should consult the preamble of General Assembly resolution 64/35, which established this International Day by unanimous consent.

The General Assembly was certainly convinced on what a ban on nuclear tests would accomplish—namely, it would “avert devastating and harmful effects on the lives and health of people and the environment”. The preamble added that the General Assembly was also convinced “that the end of nuclear tests is one of the key means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world”. In other words, a nuclear test ban is not an end in itself but is connected to the larger goal of achieving nuclear disarmament.

Following the logic of that preamble, the question then arose of how such a goal could be accomplished, and the preamble offered two answers. The first emphasized “the essential role of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, academia and mass media”. And the second acknowledged “the related importance of education as a tool for peace, security, disarmament and non-proliferation”.

With a renewed commitment by the world diplomatic community and civil society to achieve a global ban on nuclear tests, one ambitious but worthy goal would be to promote the entry into force of the CTBT by 29 August next year. What would be a more appropriate day or month? At the NPT review conference in 2010, the States parties reaffirmed “the vital importance of the entry into force” of the CTBT. So if August is the appropriate month, surely 2015—the year of the next NPT review conference—is the appropriate year.

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<sup>1</sup> George Santayana, Life of Reason (1905).

There should be no more delays. The very act of banning all nuclear tests will help in advancing the larger objectives of outlawing and eliminating nuclear weapons. There is a principle here that bears repeating—weapons that are illegal to test should also be illegal to possess.

Next year, the world will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. What a fitting occasion this would be to close the door permanently on nuclear testing.

It is a goal well worth pursuing. It fires the imagination. It is easy to communicate. Its objective is clear, which facilitates confirmation that it has been achieved. It will help in determining who is obstructing the fulfilment of this global norm and this can contribute to advocacy efforts to achieve entry into force.

Our common ideal should be a world that has no need for an International Day against Nuclear Tests. We may be closer to such a world than we think. The dawn of a world free of nuclear tests may well lead to the last sunset of nuclear weapons. Before we dismiss this possibility, let us try it first. We would be credited if we succeed and the world would know who is responsible if we fail.