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Library Note

Debate on 21st January: Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament and Strengthening Non-Proliferation

This Library Note aims to provide background reading for the Debate to be held on Thursday 21st January:

“To call attention to the prospects for multi-lateral nuclear disarmament and for strengthening nuclear non-proliferation”

The Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference will take place in May 2010. This Note summarises the main issues addressed in the Foreign Office information paper *Lifting the Nuclear Shadow: Creating the Conditions for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* and the Government's agenda for the Review Conference, as laid out in the Cabinet Office paper *The Road to 2010: Addressing the Nuclear Question in the Twenty First Century*. The Note also chronicles the main developments in the international community since the publication of these papers and summarises some of the contributions to the nuclear debate from a variety of sources, including the views of the UN Secretary General and the former Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

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Table of Contents

1. <i>Lifting the Nuclear Shadow</i>	1
2. Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2010.....	2
2.1 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences	2
2.2 <i>The Road to 2010</i>	3
3. Developments	6
4. Contributions to the debate	9

1. *Lifting the Nuclear Shadow*

On 4th February 2009, the Foreign Secretary, David Milliband launched a policy information paper, [*Lifting the Nuclear Shadow: Creating the Conditions for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*](#), which “aims to explain the main issues and what the UK is doing to address them”. Introducing the background to the nuclear debate, the paper states that with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the “threat of conflict between the major powers dwindled and with it, many thought, the rationale for nuclear weapons. There was hope of a new world order which would no longer rely on the threat of mutual annihilation as a basis for maintaining the peace”. However, the paper warns that despite substantial progress—the total explosive power of nuclear arsenal in the UK has been cut by around 75%—“the rationale for nuclear weapons, though it has evolved in the warmed relations between the major powers, has not evaporated”. The paper then outlines the security context in which the debate takes place:

Foremost amongst the new security threats are the risks of nuclear weapons spreading to more states or falling into the hands of terrorists. North Korea tested a nuclear device in 2006 and there are serious concerns that Iran is also developing nuclear weapons in defiance of the international community. Terrorist groups are known to be trying to acquire nuclear materials and knowhow. At the same time, these may become more widely available with the worldwide expansion of nuclear energy in response to climate change.

(p 5)

Acknowledging the argument that those states with nuclear weapons would be “open to coercion or attack if they gave up their nuclear weapons at the same time as others acquired them”, the paper notes that some commentators believe that retaining nuclear weapons can become part of the problem. However, the paper refutes the suggestion that “the UK should give a lead by destroying all our own nuclear weapons”, stating that “our serious commitment to global nuclear disarmament should not be confused with unilateral disarmament... If the UK were to dismantle all our nuclear weapons, it is highly unlikely that others would do the same. Nor do we believe it would have any positive effect on current proliferators like Iran” (pp 7–8).

Launching the paper, David Milliband laid out the six key steps needed to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world in a speech to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). The following is an excerpt from a transcript of the speech:

The first is to prevent proliferation. That speaks directly to the nuclear issue of the moment. I think it is very welcome indeed that the United States should be seeking to enter the multilateral debate about the Iranian nuclear programme and also discussing its own bilateral engagement with the Iranian Government. I think that we have said for a long time that this is a vital issue, not just for the Middle East, which has more than enough problems without a nuclear arms race, but also for the global integrity of the Non Proliferation Treaty and so I think it's right that we put at the heart and at the start of our approach the need to counter proliferation.

Second issue which is important because there are important links here, the growth of civilian nuclear power seems to me to be essential to meet not just the energy needs, but the climate change requirements that countries (indistinct) but that expansion of civilian nuclear power needs to be done according what I would call the gold standard of safety and security. And I think that the way in which

countries like the UAE have pursued their own civilian nuclear power programme with the utmost transparency, the utmost determination to meet the higher standards of safety and security and the utmost determination to work with international bodies is a very, very important signal of the way things should proceed in the future.

A third area is the need and the benefit of the United States and Russia re-engaging to achieve dramatic cuts in their own nuclear stockpiles. You will have seen the commitments of President Obama in this area, not least with the people he's appointing to key posts. (Indistinct) in the public debate that figures like eighty per cent are being, eighty per cent reduction are being bandied around. It's in the public debate that a thousand warheads seems like a round number. These are very, very dramatic changes that I think are very, very welcome and I very much hope that they will be taken forward.

The fourth area is something that we've talked about for a long time in this country and I think have become a bit blasé about and that is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. I believe that (indistinct) been stuck on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty for quite a lot time, has, has really sapped the hope from many people who are committed to this agenda. I think that the reinvigoration of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty through the commitment of the Obama administration in this respect is very, very significant and suffice to say that when our Chinese visitors were in London over the weekend, Premier Wen and Foreign Minister Yang, there's a lot of interest around the world in the fact that the United States wants to re-engage on the CTBT issue.

The fifth issue is progress on the Fissile Material Cut off Treaty which as many of you will know it's currently, discussion of that is blocked by Pakistan and Iran. I think the fact that it's blocked shouldn't lead us to drop it off our agenda because if we can't make progress in that area we're going to not be able to meet our challenge of creating the right conditions for longer term (indistinct).

And then there is a sixth set of issues which are about the practicalities of moving to zero, of disarmament, of verification. (Indistinct) we really do need a lot of expertise. It's fine for politicians to set goals, but we need very detailed work (indistinct) in to practice and I think that the UK can claim to be at the leading edge of this debate in trying to promote a very serious debate around the world on some of those most difficult verification issues.

[\(IISS website\)](#)

2. Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2010

2.1 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conferences are held every five years. The NPT Review Conference website states that:

The NPT is regarded as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It was designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to further the goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Under the Treaty, each nuclear-weapon-State party undertakes not to transfer nuclear weapons to any recipient or assist or encourage any non-nuclear-weapon State to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons. Similarly, each non-nuclear-weapon-State party undertakes not to receive the transfer of nuclear weapons or manufacture or otherwise acquire them.

To further the goal of non-proliferation, the Treaty establishes a safeguards system under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Safeguards are used to verify compliance with the NPT through inspections conducted by the IAEA. The Treaty promotes cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear technology and equal access to this technology for all States parties, while safeguards prevent the diversion of fissile material for the development of weapons.

The 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) met at the United Nations in New York from 2 to 27 May 2005.

A total of 153 States parties to the Treaty participated in the event. The Conference was unable to produce a consensus substantive outcome on the review of the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty. Several of the Conference side events, such as the Mayors for Peace appeal, in particular commemorated the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

([UN website](#))

2.2 The Road to 2010

On 16th July 2009, the Government published a paper, [The Road to 2010: Addressing the Nuclear Question in the Twenty First Century](#) that set out the UK's agenda for the May 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. In a statement in support of the paper's publication, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, stated:

The world needs a renewed global bargain on nuclear for a safer world. We also need this renewed deal for our prosperity and so that we can combat climate change and to secure the energy supply we need.

We must seize the new momentum for meeting this challenge. Our Road to 2010 plan sets out an ambitious but achievable set of reforms across the entire nuclear question. Next year's Review Conference gives us the opportunity I want to renew and re-invigorate the bargain at the heart of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

For nuclear weapon states, this bargain means we have a responsibility to show leadership on the question of disarmament and being at the forefront of developing global solutions to allow wider and safe access to civil nuclear power. For non-nuclear weapon states the bargain means continuing to forego nuclear weapons, while accessing—if they wish—civil nuclear power.

Iran is a test case. The UK and the international community stand ready to help Iran achieve a peaceful civil nuclear programme. We make the same offer to Iran

as to other countries—we will help you gain access to nuclear power for peaceful purposes, but we will do everything we can to prevent weapons proliferation.

[\(Cabinet Office Press Release, 'Prime Minister sets out blueprint for addressing global nuclear challenges', 16th July 2009\)](#)

Setting out the background to the Government's position on nuclear disarmament and strengthening non-proliferation, the paper argues that, since the NPT was signed in 1968, "progress has been mixed across the non-proliferation and disarmament pillars [of the NPT]". There had also been some proliferation of nuclear weapons: "India and Pakistan have both tested and developed significant nuclear weapons capabilities; Israel is widely assumed to possess nuclear weapons; North Korea has announced two nuclear tests; and other states, most notably Iran, continue to seek nuclear weapons capabilities". The paper states that "the international community must unite to take strong steps to prevent nuclear proliferation. We must work purposefully towards the universality of the NPT and take robust action against those states, like Iran and North Korea, which seek to develop nuclear weapons" (p 8). To achieve these objectives, the paper outlines the Government's approach, divided into three phases:

- Transparency and Control

In order to establish "the conditions for further arms reductions, a number of legally binding, verifiable measures must be in place to control the proliferation of nuclear technologies and materials, and to limit and eventually reduce the activities related to nuclear weapon development and production" (p 34). The paper calls for a "transparency framework" to ensure that nuclear weapons states take "significant steps to enhance their transparency of their defence nuclear programmes", which may include developing a template originated by the P5 states (the Permanent 5 members of the UN Security Council) for releasing information into the public domain. In the context of attempts by North Korea to test nuclear weapons and Iran allegedly developing nuclear weapons, the paper reiterates the Government's desire for China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the US to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Its ratification, the paper argues, would be "a key milestone in the disarmament process and we will therefore continue our diplomatic efforts to encourage its ratification" (pp 34–35). However, "progress towards disarmament can only occur if there is a verifiable end to the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons" and the Government urges that, as a matter of urgency, negotiations start to establish a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty to "establish a finite amount of fissile material" (pp 35–36).

The paper proposes institutionalising the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which it argues "plays a key role in the global non-proliferation effort, and the UK supports global participation in this initiative. It has grown enormously since its launch in 2003: it now has 95 members and undertakes outreach and exercises with many more", and supports the Financial Action Task Force's work "on how to bring proliferation finance safeguards into the system of internationally agreed standards against illicit financing" (p 36).

The paper also supports effective export controls in accordance with UN Security Resolution 1540 and states that through the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) "the UK is currently working with other participating governments within the NSG to make the guidelines on the transfer of sensitive enrichment and reprocessing technologies more rigorous" (p 37).

- Arms Reductions

The Road to 2010 explains that despite the fall in the number of nuclear warheads since the end of the Cold War, there is still “a significant global stockpile and its continued reduction must be pursued”. Noting that 95 per cent of the global stockpile of weapons is held between the US and Russia, the paper says the Government “welcomes the commitment of the US and Russia to negotiate a new legally binding agreement to replace START, ensuring that progress on disarmament for these two states will be maintained once the treaty expires in December 2009” (p 38). The paper also reaffirms the UK’s commitment to playing its “full part” in NATO’s review of its Strategic Concept, within which nuclear issues will be examined (p 39).

Government policy on the UK’s nuclear deterrent was set out in its 2006 White Paper and “that continues to be the basis on which we consider those capabilities”. In spite of “encouraging developments internationally”, the paper states that “a decision not to renew our strategic deterrent would commit the UK Government to unilateral disarmament in still uncertain circumstances. The Government continues to judge, as in 2006, that a minimum nuclear deterrent remains an essential element of our national security”. However, the paper explains that “once the strategic conditions are established that allow the US and Russia to make substantial reductions beyond those being currently negotiated of their warhead stockpiles, we believe that it is likely to be appropriate for the UK to reconsider the size of its own stockpile of operationally available warheads” (p 38).

- Steps to Zero

The Government believes that should all the measures they propose be implemented it would lead to “a world with greatly reduced nuclear stockpiles, with all those states still retaining nuclear capabilities signed up to a tough regime of transparency and verification, with a well-established treaty regime to prevent any reversal of the disarmament measures already implemented”. However, the paper states that “the final step to eliminate nuclear weapons will be the most challenging”, acknowledging “ultimately states will only give up these weapons if they feel confident and secure they are no longer required”. In regard to South and East Asia, the paper, noting the status of China, India and Pakistan in regard to the NPT and CTBT, reiterates that the UK will “continue to press for the universal application of both the NPT and CTBT”, as “it is in the long term interests of regional and global security for India and Pakistan to commence a process that will enable them to engage in the global disarmament framework” (p 39).

The paper notes that “in the Middle East there are serious challenges on both non-proliferation and disarmament”. In relation to Israel, who are outside the NPT, “the UK will, therefore, work to bring Israel into the non-proliferation mainstream and encourage Israel to sign the NPT”, and in regard to the Middle East broadly, “the UK supports the establishment of a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone”. Working with Russia, this would involve urging states to “sign the relevant conventions on chemical and biological weapons; to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; and to participate in the negotiation of a FMCT [Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty]” (p 40).

Verification of disarmament is the “critical element of the final process to eliminate nuclear weapons”. The paper highlights the success of the UK’s research programme in becoming a “disarmament laboratory”, leading research in order to meet both the “technical and non-technical aspects of verifying disarmament”. Key to this, however, is the Government’s belief that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) requires reform. The paper outlines a number of proposals in this regard in order to make the Agency “fit for purpose” (p 44). Among the UK’s objectives is to “ensure the Agency has

credibility, expertise and legitimacy” and to enable the Agency to “find and report promptly to the UN Security Council (UNSC) any instance of non-compliance” (p 43).

The paper’s section on nuclear disarmament and strengthening non-proliferation concludes by stating “ultimately, as with other parts of the Road to 2010 plan, confidence in the multilateral enforcement system is key to making progress. We must ensure there is a proper, robust system of detection of noncompliance and verification of compliance” (p 29).

3. Developments

The Government paper, [*The Road to 2010: Addressing the Nuclear Question in the Twenty First Century*](#), refers to “positive developments involving nuclear weapon states and others [that] have reinvigorated the global debate on disarmament”. The paper summarises some of the progress the Government feels has been made in the international community on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament:

- the US and Russia have signed a Joint Understanding that commits them to further reductions of their strategic warheads and strategic delivery vehicles through a replacement to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START);
- agreement has been reached to expand the G8 Global Partnership to facilitate wider engagement in threat reduction work outside Russia and Ukraine;
- the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 established the national implementation measures states should take with regard to nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, related materials and their means of delivery. It also set up the ‘1540 Committee’ in order to report to the Security Council on progress in implementation of the resolution;
- the agreement of UNSCR 1810 in 2008 gave a strengthened 3-year mandate to the United Nations Security Council Committee on Non-Proliferation;
- the international community responded to North Korea’s announcement of a second nuclear test by unanimously passing UNSCR 1874 on 12th June, showing a united front against their continued proliferation activities;
- 5 UNSCRs have been passed to make the suspension of Iran’s enrichment related and heavy-water activities mandatory; under the French Presidency in 2008 the 27 EU Heads of Government have committed to a wide-ranging and comprehensive eight-point plan addressing the most urgent nuclear and other disarmament issues facing the international community; and,
- the Conference on Disarmament, which has been blocked for several years, has recently reached consensus on a programme of work for 2009.

(p 31)

Since the paper’s publication there have been a number of further developments on the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The following summarises some of the main developments in the last 12 months.

In a speech in Prague in April 2009, President Obama stated “clearly and with conviction

America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons". President Obama then elaborated on his agenda for nuclear disarmament and strengthening non-proliferation, saying:

To reduce our warheads and stockpiles, we will negotiate a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russians this year. President Medvedev and I began this process in London, and will seek a new agreement by the end of this year that is legally binding and sufficiently bold. And this will set the stage for further cuts, and we will seek to include all nuclear weapons states in this endeavour.

To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. After more than five decades of talks, it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned.

And to cut off the building blocks needed for a bomb, the United States will seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons. If we are serious about stopping the spread of these weapons, then we should put an end to the dedicated production of weapons-grade materials that create them. That's the first step.

Second, together we will strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a basis for cooperation.

The basic bargain is sound: Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy. To strengthen the treaty, we should embrace several principles. We need more resources and authority to strengthen international inspections. We need real and immediate consequences for countries caught breaking the rules or trying to leave the treaty without cause.

[\(White House Press Release, 'Remarks by President Barack Obama', 5th April 2009\)](#)

In July, in a joint statement between President Obama and President Medvedev, the US and Russia announced "their commitment to strengthening their cooperation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and stop acts of nuclear terrorism". The statement said the parties would continue to cooperate on export controls to prevent nuclear materials, equipment and technologies falling into the hands of actors "unauthorised by the state", confirmed their intention to broaden and deepen long-term cooperation to increase nuclear security and reaffirmed their commitment to disposing of "existing stockpiles of weapon-grade materials that are surplus to defence needs" ([White House Press Release, 'Joint Statement by President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Dmitry Medvedev of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Cooperation', 6th July 2009\)](#)).

In the same month, the G8 leaders issued a statement, announcing their determination "to seize the current opportunities and the new momentum to strengthen our common non-proliferation and disarmament goals through effective multilateralism and determined national efforts". Calling upon all states still not party to the NPT to "accede without delay", the statement reiterated a "full commitment to the objectives of its three pillars: non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and disarmament" ([G8 Summit 2009 website\)](#)).

In September, at a Security Council meeting in New York chaired by President Obama, the UN unanimously adopted resolution 1887, which a UN statement described as “its first comprehensive action on nuclear issues since the mid-1990s”. The statement explained the agreement in the following terms:

Council members emphasized that the body had a primary responsibility to address nuclear threats, and that all situations of non-compliance with nuclear treaties should be brought to its attention.

The Council reaffirmed, in particular, its strong support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, calling on States that were not yet signatories to accede to it. It also called on States parties to comply fully with their obligations and to set realistic goals to strengthen, at the 2010 Review Conference, all three of the Treaty’s pillars—disarmament of countries currently possessing nuclear weapons, non-proliferation to countries not yet in possession, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy for all.

While the resolution did not target specific countries, the Council demanded that parties involved in “major challenges to the non-proliferation regime” comply fully with their obligations, and reaffirmed its call on them to find early negotiated solutions to their issues.

The text underlined the right to pursue peaceful nuclear energy under IAEA supervision, but also urged States to curb the export of nuclear-related material to countries that had terminated their compliance with Agency safeguards agreements. It also called for the enforcement of strict controls on nuclear material to prevent it from falling into dangerous hands.

In addition, the Council called upon all States to refrain from conducting nuclear test explosions and to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in order to bring it into force as soon as possible. It called upon the Conference on Disarmament to quickly negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for explosive devices.

[\(UN Press Release, ‘Historic Summit of Security Council pledges support for progress on stalled efforts to end nuclear proliferation’, 24th September 2009\)](#)

Responding to the agreement, Gordon Brown welcomed the resolution stating that “we are sending a united, unequivocal and undivided message across the world that we, as leaders of nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, are together committed to creating the conditions for a world free from nuclear weapons”. Later in the speech, Gordon Brown, pledged that “the United Kingdom will retain only the absolute minimum credible and continuing nuclear deterrent capability”, adding, “subject to technical analysis and to progress in multilateral negotiations, my aim is that when the next class of submarines enters service in the mid-2020s, our fleet should be reduced from four boats to three” (Gordon Brown, *Transcript of Speech in New York*, 24th September 2009).

In November 2009, the White House published joint statements between the US and a number of other states, including China and India, which highlighted areas of agreement. A joint statement with China stated that “the two sides agreed that respect for the Treaty on the non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, IAEA mandates, and implementation of all relevant UN Security Council resolutions are essential for the success of our joint efforts to stem the spread of nuclear weapons. The two presidents recalled their participation at

the September 24th, 2009, UN Security Council Summit on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. They welcomed the outcome of the Summit and expressed their strong support for UN Security Resolution 1887” ([White House Press Release, ‘US–China Joint Statement’, 17th November 2009](#)). A joint statement with India said:

Prime Minister Singh and President Obama reaffirmed their shared vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and pledged to work together, as leaders of responsible states with advanced nuclear technology, for global non-proliferation, and universal, non-discriminatory and complete nuclear disarmament. Part of that vision is working together to ensure that all nations live up to their international obligations. India reaffirmed its unilateral and voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing.

([White House Press Release, ‘Joint Statement between Prime Minister Dr. Singh and President Obama’, 24th November 2009](#))

In December, President Obama and President Medvedev, during discussions in Copenhagen about Climate Change, met further to discuss progress on their negotiations regarding a new treaty. President Obama said, “our main focus today was the START treaty—the new START treaty that we have been negotiating. We’ve been making excellent progress. We are quite close to an agreement. And I’m confident that it will be completed in a timely fashion” ([White House Press Release, ‘Remarks by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev after Meeting’, 18th December 2009](#)). However, a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* cast some doubt on whether any agreement would be passed by the US Senate. Additionally the paper argued:

The stakes here aren’t merely whether Mr. Obama can get his treaties ratified; they concern the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Mr. Obama says he wants to stop nuclear proliferation but he will only encourage it if our allies begin to believe that the U.S. arsenal is either too small or too unreliable to protect them. Japan has already raised concerns, and with Mr. Obama unable or unwilling to stop either North Korean or Iranian nuclear ambitions, such worry will only spread.

([Wall Street Journal, ‘A False Nuclear Start’, 5th January 2009](#))

4. Contributions to the debate

This section offers some perspectives on the prospect of nuclear disarmament and of strengthening non-proliferation. This is not a comprehensive selection but provides a flavour of some of the different contributions made.

In an address to the UN Security Council summit in September 2009, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, argued that “the need for action is clear. Thousands of nuclear weapons remain on hair-trigger alert. More states have sought and acquired them... as long as such weapons exist, so does the risk of proliferation and catastrophic use”. On this basis he explained what he thought needed to be done:

Now... some might dismiss the goal of nuclear disarmament as utopian. The cynics say “Stop dreaming. Be realistic”. They are wrong. Nuclear disarmament is the only sane path to a safer world. Nothing would work better in eliminating the risk of use than eliminating the weapons themselves. The Russian Federation and the United States are leading by example. I urge the Security

Council to make the most of this moment. This should not be a one-time event. We must sustain the momentum.

First, we need new ways to increase transparency and openness regarding the weapons programmes of the recognized nuclear-weapons States. I urge the Council to start consultations on this matter. The Secretariat is ready to serve as a repository.

Second, we must make the best use of the United Nations disarmament machinery. I hope, for example, that the Conference on Disarmament can advance the programme of work it adopted this year, including negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. For its part, the Council could promote universal membership in key treaties, work to improve compliance, and assess the need for new agreements, including a nuclear weapons convention. It could also strongly reaffirm the need for early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Third, disarmament and non-proliferation must proceed together. I encourage nuclear weapon States here to consider additional measures to enhance security as a way of leading to total elimination. These could include, for example, ways to achieve the effective verification of the disarmament process.

At the same time, we must ensure that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has the resources and support it needs to implement its growing safeguards responsibilities. For too long, a divided international community has lacked the will, vision and confidence to move ahead. Together, we have dreamed about a nuclear-weapon-free world. Now we must act to achieve it. That starts now.

[\(Ban Ki-Moon, *Disarmament, Non-Proliferation Must Proceed Together*, 24th September 2009\)](#)

In an article examining current atomic threats, Graham Allison, of Harvard University, argues that “the global nuclear order today could be as fragile as the global financial order was two years ago, when conventional wisdom declared it to be sound, stable, and resilient”. Identifying North Korea, Iran and Pakistan as the main nuclear challenges, Allison summarises the nuclear weapons picture as follows:

U.S. President Barack Obama has endorsed President Ronald Reagan’s vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and has enlisted the endorsement of many other leaders, including Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Most realists in the international security community, however, regard such thinking as a hazy, long-term, and probably unachievable aspiration.

In the meantime, France is modernizing its nuclear arsenal, which President Nicolas Sarkozy has called “the nation’s life insurance policy”. China continues the modernization and expansion of its limited nuclear arsenal. With the collapse of its conventional forces, Russia has renewed its reliance on nuclear weapons. In the United States, the release of this year’s Nuclear Posture Review, these reviews being a process meant to assess whether the U.S. nuclear arsenal is “reliable”, will spark debates about whether the United States is building a stealth version of the earlier proposed “reliable replacement warhead”.

Even more important than proposals for future programs are lessons learned from recent actions. The George W. Bush administration designated Iran, Iraq,

and North Korea as “an axis of evil” and then proceeded to attack the one state that demonstrably had no nuclear weapons and give a pass to the state that had two bombs’ worth of plutonium. The British strategist Lawrence Freedman summarized the lessons drawn by national security analysts around the world this way: “The only apparently credible way to deter the armed force of the US is to own your own nuclear arsenal”. Many Iranians, and even a few Iraqis, have wondered whether the United States would have invaded Iraq in 2003 had Iraq been armed with a nuclear arsenal as large as North Korea’s current one.

[\(Graham Allison, ‘Nuclear Disorder’, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2010\)](#)

Charles.D.Ferguson, President of the Federation of American Scientists, writes of a nuclear weapons conundrum. He says that “in a world where the strongest conventional military power cannot envision giving up its nuclear weapons before all other nations have abandoned theirs, how will humanity ever rid itself of these weapons?”. Ferguson argues that the international community needs to establish a set of responsible behaviour principles for countries with nuclear arsenals and for those with nuclear materials that could be used to make weapons. He writes:

The first principle must be that all states would benefit from a world in which no one ever again used nuclear weapons. This leads to the second principle: governments must declare that nuclear weapons are only necessary for deterring the use of other nuclear weapons—a shift that would enhance the security of all states and at the same time reduce the perceived strategic value of these weapons. As Ivo Daalder and Jan Lodal argued in these pages (“The Logic of Zero”, November/December 2008), “only one real purpose remains for U.S. nuclear weapons: to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by others”, meaning that they should not be used to respond to conventional, chemical, or biological attacks. The United States, however, has followed a policy of calculated ambiguity that leaves adversaries in doubt about whether it would employ nuclear weapons if attacked by nonnuclear means. So far, the U.S. government has been reluctant to state explicitly that it will not.

Washington must address several concerns before making such an explicit declaration. First, adversaries may fear that this decision could be reversed easily if, for example, the United States or its allies were attacked with biological weapons. Second, certain allies, such as Japan and South Korea, may doubt the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence commitments because they fear a Chinese conventional attack or conventional, chemical, or biological attacks by North Korea. The United States currently has the strength to establish a new international norm against the use of nuclear weapons to respond to non-nuclear threats, and it should seize the opportunity to do so.

The third principle should be that every state that possesses nuclear weapons or materials and technologies that can be used in nuclear weapons must ensure the security of their arsenals and stockpiles. For example, many nonnuclear weapons states use highly enriched uranium (HEU) to produce medical isotopes for diagnoses and cancer treatment. However, HEU can also be used to fuel basic nuclear weapons, and therefore states possessing HEU should replace it

with less highly enriched materials that cannot be used in weapons or substitute it with alternative nonnuclear technology.

[\(Charles D Ferguson, 'The Long Road to Zero: Overcoming Obstacles to a Nuclear-Free World', *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2010\)](#)

In his last address to the UN General Assembly as the IAEA Director General, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei spoke about the achievements of the Agency and challenges ahead. On nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Dr ElBaradei said:

I have in the past drawn the General Assembly's attention to the growing number of states that have mastered uranium enrichment or plutonium reprocessing. Any one of these states has the capacity to develop nuclear weapons in a short span of time—a margin of security which is too close for comfort. To address this challenge, which could be the Achilles Heel of non-proliferation, I believe that we need to move from national to multinational control of the nuclear fuel cycle. As a first step, I have proposed the establishment of a low enriched uranium bank to assure states a guaranteed last-resort supply of nuclear fuel for their reactors so that they might not need their own enrichment or reprocessing capability.

A number of complementary proposals have also been made. There are no technical or legal stumbling blocks that could not be overcome. The basic question is one of trust-building between states. I remain convinced that some such mechanism is essential as more and more countries introduce nuclear energy. Our ultimate goal should be the full multinationalization of the sensitive parts of the fuel cycle—uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing—as we move towards a world free from nuclear weapons.

Such a world is, I believe, within our grasp following the courageous initiative of President Obama and the resumption of serious disarmament negotiations between the two largest nuclear weapon states. Nuclear weapons are, regrettably, still seen as bringing power and prestige and providing an insurance policy against possible attack. However, by demonstrating their irreversible commitment to achieving a world free from nuclear weapons, the weapon states can greatly enhance the value and legitimacy of the non-proliferation regime and gain the moral authority to call on the rest of the world to curb the proliferation of these inhumane weapons. I do not expect to see a world free from nuclear weapons in my lifetime, but I am increasingly hopeful that my children may live in such a world, particularly in light of the growing realization that, with the technology out of the box and an increasing risk of nuclear terrorism, the danger of nuclear weapons being used has increased considerably. The recent adoption of resolution 1887 by the Security Council, pledging to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, is encouraging. It is vital that the 2010 NPT Review Conference should build on this momentum.

[\(Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, *Statement to the Sixty-Fourth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly*, 2nd November 2009\)](#)

In November 2009, the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament published a report, [*Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers*](#). Introducing the paper, the authors state that “so long as any state has nuclear weapons, others will want them. So long as any such weapons remain, it defies credibility that they will not one day be used, by accident, miscalculation or design. And any such use would be catastrophic. It is sheer luck that the world has escaped such catastrophe until now”. However, explaining the objective of its report, the authors

say that “with new U.S. and Russian leadership seriously committed to disarmament action, there is a new opportunity—the first since the immediate post-World War II and post-Cold War years—to halt, and reverse, the nuclear weapons tide once and for all. This report describes, not just rhetorically but in the detail that global policymakers need, how that opportunity can and should be seized” (p XVII). As part of these proposals, the report identifies a short-term action agenda up to 2012, including objectives it would like to see agreed at the 2010 Review Conference:

On Disarmament

- Early agreement on a Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) follow-on treaty, with the U.S. and Russia agreeing to deep reductions in deployed strategic weapons, addressing the issue of strategic missile defence and commencing negotiations on further deep cuts in all classes of weapons.
- Early movement on nuclear doctrine, with all nuclear-armed states declaring at least that the sole purpose of retaining the nuclear weapons they have is to deter others from using such weapons against them or their allies (while giving firm assurances to such allies that they will not be exposed to unacceptable risk from other sources, including in particular chemical and biological weapons).
- All nuclear-armed states to give strong negative security assurances to complying non-nuclear weapon states parties to the NPT, supported by binding Security Council resolution, that they will not use nuclear weapons against them.
- Early action on nuclear force postures, with particular attention to the negotiated removal to the extent possible of weapons from “launch-on-warning” status.
- Early commitment by all nuclear-armed states to not increasing their nuclear arsenals.
- Prepare the ground for a multilateral disarmament process by all nuclear-armed states conducting relevant studies; engaging in strategic dialogues with the U.S., Russia and each other; and commencing a joint dialogue within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament work program.

On Non-Proliferation

- A positive outcome for the May 2010 NPT Review Conference, with member states reaching agreement on measures to strengthen the NPT regime, including improved safeguards, verification, compliance and enforcement; measures to strengthen the effectiveness of the IAEA; “A New International Consensus for Action on Nuclear Disarmament” statement on disarmament issues; and measures to advance the implementation of the Middle East and other existing and proposed Nuclear Weapon Free Zones.
- Satisfactory negotiated resolution of the North Korea and Iran nuclear program problems.
- Movement toward strengthening non-proliferation regimes outside the NPT, and applying equivalent disciplines to NPT non-members.

(p XXVII)

Writing in the *World Today*, Paulo Wrobel, a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Analyst and Advisor at the Brazilian Embassy in London, offered his perspective on the forthcoming NPT Review Conference in May 2010. Wrobel argues that, in spite of the

“new momentum” created by the election of President Obama, “the international security arena has not evolved in a conducive way to multilateral negotiations on nuclear proliferation and nuclear disarmament” (Paulo Wrobel, ‘Back to the Bargain’, *World Today*, November 2009, p 16). Wrobel writes:

North Korea still vacillates on the six-party talks to deal with its nuclear programme and has not rejoined the Treaty. The political-security situation in Iraq has stabilised but Afghanistan remains a main concern for NATO. The fear that weapons of mass destruction could spread to the region is one of the main reasons for its involvement in this troubled nation.

In the Middle East, if anything the situation has deteriorated since 2005; Iran is now the main hotspot for nuclear proliferation. Israel, India and Pakistan remain outside the Treaty and, it seems, keep testing and refining their nuclear weaponry. The non-ratification so far by the US of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is another hindrance to the use of moral persuasion on these three outsiders to abide by the rules and regulations.

So, if the international context in which the review conference takes place is a crucial determinant for success or failure, 2010 does not look good. On the other hand, there are moments in international affairs when a leader, as in the case of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s, together with a particular international mood of optimism creates a momentum that could lead to unexpected and bold results. Obama, armed with his Nobel Prize, could produce one of those moments, but there is a risk that if the review conference is a failure, and is seen to be a failure, the Treaty could unravel.

(p 17)

