

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS TO NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE
New York, 24 October 2011

Mr. Francis Finlay Co-Chairman of the EastWest Institute,
Mr. John Mroz, President and CEO of the EastWest Institute,
Mr. Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying what a special pleasure it is to be with you.

This is the third time I've spoken at a conference organized by the EastWest Institute. At the first, in 2008, I launched a five-point proposal for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Then, as now, I believed we are at a crucial moment.

I believed the time was right to inject new momentum into the disarmament agenda; to build on the energy and ideas of so many around the world who have challenged us to act — and to act now.

Today, I want to thank the EastWest Institute, the Global Security Institute, and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies. We have today a fine opportunity to take stock and look forward.

Now, we all know that the experts have been talking for decades about banning nuclear weapons.

And yet ... here we are. Tens of thousands of nuclear weapons remain. New ones are being designed and built everyday. And to what purpose?

Even those who believe in this noble cause too often speak of nuclear disarmament as a distant dream — even a pie-in-the-sky ideal.

As Secretary-General, I want to bring disarmament down to earth.

Instead of hearing the word “disarmament” floating in the air, I want to see disarmament facts on the ground.

This is what inspired my five-point plan for action.

First, I called for leadership by the nuclear-weapon States, including good-faith negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention. I also called for talks on deep and verifiable reductions in the largest nuclear arsenals held by the Russian Federation and the United States.

Second, I encouraged nuclear-weapon States to pledge that such weapons would never be used against non-nuclear States. I also urged the Security Council to hold a summit meeting on nuclear disarmament.

Third, I called for new efforts to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force and to begin negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material treaty. Disarmament must be rooted in legal obligations.

Fourth, I called on all nuclear-weapon States to report their disarmament efforts to the UN Secretariat. Without real transparency, there can be no real accountability.

Fifth, I stressed the need to work toward the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction, and to develop new controls over missiles, space weapons, and conventional arms.

Three years on, we have seen some concrete progress.

In September 2009, the Security Council held its first-ever summit on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Last year, the Russian Federation and the United States signed the New Start treaty.

Meanwhile, support for a nuclear weapons convention continues to grow.

In 2010, the annual General Assembly resolution for negotiating such a convention gained the votes of 133 Member States — the most ever. And last year's 2010 NPT Review Conference adopted a Final Document that acknowledged support for the nuclear weapons convention. Civil society groups have gathered millions of signatures for this cause.

We have begun to lay the groundwork for a Conference on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Finally, we have seen global action to improve nuclear safety and security.

Last month, in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, I convened a High-level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security. I hope it can serve as a stepping stone to other efforts, including the 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I would like to outline my thoughts for how to advance this progress.

Most immediately, the world is expecting a deeper reduction in the largest nuclear arsenals. This should include limits on both non-strategic nuclear weapons and non-deployed weapons. And by weapon reduction, I mean weapon destruction.

There is an indispensable role here for international verification, especially over the disposition of fissile materials from dismantled weapons.

We need a significant improvement in transparency. Too little is known about existing stockpiles of weapons, fissile materials, and delivery systems. The UN's disarmament repository offers a useful tool for States in encouraging greater transparency.

Next year's first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference offers an opportunity to strengthen accountability in fulfilling the disarmament commitments made at the 2010 Review Conference.

We must also strengthen the rule of law in disarmament.

This would include elaboration of the legal obligations needed to achieve nuclear disarmament, including the contents of a future nuclear weapons convention.

I would also add the possibility of another Security Council summit meeting; and ratification of the Protocols to all the regional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, especially in Central Asia and Southeast Asia, along with determined efforts to establish a WMD-free zone in the Middle East.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should be brought into force without further delay.

And, of course, we cannot advance rule of law issues without the Conference on Disarmament, the world's only multilateral negotiating body for disarmament. For too long, this vital body has been paralyzed by differing priorities. It is stumbling into irrelevance. This does credit to no one. It must fulfill its responsibility to act.

As we look ahead, we must keep our eyes fixed on our universally agreed "ultimate goal" of general and complete disarmament.

All of what I have proposed is achievable and none would impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence as affirmed in the Charter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a full agenda – and we cannot achieve it alone.

The future of nuclear disarmament rests on many shoulders: nuclear-weapon States, the international diplomatic community, and, of course, a robust collective effort by civil society.

What impresses me most is not the sheer number of disarmament groups that are making a difference, but their diversity.

Over the past three years, our bonds have grown even stronger.

I have seen the passion of the arguments and the power of the stories -- from the former Soviet nuclear testing ground in Semipalatinsk ... to Hiroshima and Nagasaki where I heard first-hand from the *hibakusha* survivors. In Mexico City, I attended one of the largest gatherings of disarmament NGOs ever.

These groups are expanding their networks and their use of social media, as seen in the efforts the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Global Zero and many others.

We can and we must continue this momentum for progress.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Exactly one week from today, the world will welcome the 7 billionth member of our human family.

We are 7 days from 7 billion.

What kind of future will that child have?

We know that world of tomorrow is shaped by the decisions we make today.

A world free of nuclear weapons is a concrete possibility.

Let us realize that dream so that 7 billion people can live in peace and security.