

The Increasing Fragility of the NPT

Keynote Speech

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Thank you Mr. Secretary-General. It is a pleasure to again participate in the Vancouver Canadian International Model United Nations and I want to congratulate the organizers for, both the successful event last year, and now for this second Canadian International Model United Nations. And I would like to thank you for the invitation to speak here today.

I welcome the delegates and am pleased that you will be focusing on nuclear disarmament. The United Nations is extremely important for the peace and security of this world and I commend you for your participation in this event - for your interest and for your contributions which further *the cause* of the United Nations.

And it is a cause – a principle, a movement grounded in the ideals of humankind – which requires the efforts of all us to be active in pursuit of these goals and to ground them in reality. It is our *one hope* for peace, harmony and equality for all on this planet. And it is very important that people like you continue to support its continuity, and the furtherance of its goals for global peace and security. The world needs the United Nations and the United Nations needs the support of the global community for it to realize its goals.

The Preamble to the United Nations Charter begins:

We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our life-time has brought untold sorrow to mankind.

The major purpose of the United Nations – peace, security and prosperity – is to be achieved through conflict resolution through peaceful negotiations, the promotion of human rights, of justice, of social progress and improved standards of living. And the principal goal is the prevention of war. The only certainty of achieving this goal is through disarmament.

Dismayingly, the creation of the United Nations has not resulted in the end of war, or in the reduction or elimination of weapons – in fact the reverse has occurred. Between the years since 1945 - the year the United Nations Charter entered into force - and the year 2000, approximately 41 million people were killed in *armed conflict*.¹ And between 1945 and the present, some seventy-five percent of these deaths were of civilians. Furthermore, the total number of weapons in the world are more than enough to destroy all human life on the planet.

Disarmament has become increasingly important. The weapons continue to multiply and because of new sophisticated technology, they are more destructive – and more of danger to innocent civilians.

¹ *Milton Leitenberg, Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century*
Cornell University Peace Studies Program Occasional Paper #29 3rd ed.
©August 2003, 2005, 2006)

Prior to World War II - to paraphrase former U.S. President Eisenhower - when weapons were needed, ploughshares were turned into swords. But massive investment in weapons manufacture during World War II transformed the pre-war *industrial* society into a *military* industrial society. And the defence industry has become the primary economic driving force underpinning society and culture. The concept of military security has become the predominant paradigm in politics and society.

We are so psychologically conditioned to accept this, that it is very difficult to *even* imagine a safer world in which we would live in peace and without fear – in a world in which conflict is resolved by diplomacy, negotiation, compromise and trade-offs without resort to military force – to killing. And this is role of the United Nations! Unfortunately, parallel to the United Nations is a counter-world bristling with dangerous weaponry; and we remain engaged in an ungoing political struggle to reject military force as a solution to conflict.

My area of expertise is nuclear disarmament – a key goal of the United Nations - so I am pleased to be invited to address the delegates of this conference on this subject, especially because the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – of which I will speak more in a few minutes – is becoming increasingly fragile.

Nuclear disarmament was the subject of the first Resolution adopted by United Nations - on January 24th, 1946 - five months after the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And on June 14th of that year, Bernard Baruch, the United States Representative to the newly formed, United Nations Atomic Energy Commission called for a ban of atomic weapons, and for atomic energy to be available only for peaceful uses.

“We are here – he said - to make a choice between the quick and the dead If we fail, then we have damned every man to be the slave of Fear. Let us not deceive ourselves” he continued: “We must elect World Peace or World Destruction. Science has torn from nature a secret so vast in its potentialities that our minds cower from the terror it createsbut science does not show us how to prevent its baleful use.”

His words continue to haunt us and if they do not they should!

Baruch’s presentation was the first attempt to control nuclear weapons. He called for the ban of atomic weapons and for atomic energy to be available only for peaceful uses. Unfortunately, this plan came to naught because neither the United States nor the Soviet Union trusted the other. The Soviet Union wanted the United States to eliminate its weapons before it signed an Agreement, and the United States wanted the security of a signed Agreement before it dismantled its atomic arsenal.

Nothing much has changed with regard to this lack of trust! And now we have nine states with nuclear weapons and some 32 with the capability to develop these weapons.

Nuclear arsenals grew, and by 1985, the total number of nuclear weapons had the destructive capacity of one million, four hundred thousand Hiroshima bombs.²

Weapons numbers have come down since the end of the Cold War to some 17,000. However, enough nuclear weapons remain to kill – to incinerate - all people on earth. And it is my view that we are fortunate – and it is perhaps miraculous - that we have survived until now without a major catastrophe involving nuclear weapons.

The very possession of nuclear weapons endangers humanity. Their continued existence on hair-trigger alert and targeted for immediate launch creates the possibility of a malicious, an accidental or mistaken launch and is an invitation to cyber terrorists. As well, there is the danger of nuclear accidents of which there is already a considerable history. Inadequate security of fissile materials and warheads, in some states, leaves open the possibility of acquisition by terrorists. Moreover, there are ongoing attempts by terrorist organizations to acquire nuclear weapons and nuclear technology.

The deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons is considered to be the greatest danger we face. And the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use, or threat of use. Yet, the United States and Russia – despite the end of the Cold War – have their weapons on hair-trigger alert and targeted for immediate launch.

The United States nuclear command and control system is highly automated and hackers, on a daily basis, attempt to penetrate the Pentagon. Though the Pentagon believes its systems to be impenetrable - that it is adequately protected from an unauthorized launch – there is concern about the security - the possibility of penetrability - of the Russian and Chinese command and control systems. There is concern that terrorists could fake an attack “thus provoking a nuclear response,”³ - send false signals which would cause a United States or Russian response and unleash their weapons to cause – what would be – an accidental, yet catastrophic nuclear war.

There is no ban on these weapons. Chemical and biological weapons – the other designated weapons of mass destruction – are banned but not nuclear weapons. There are three treaties banning nuclear weapons in specific places and interestingly, they are places where there are no humans.

Article V of the Antarctic Treaty forbids nuclear explosions or disposal of radioactive waste in the Antarctic. So the penguins are protected! Article I of the Seabed Treaty prohibits the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed and the ocean floor. However, there is no ban on submarines loaded with nuclear weapons.

² Peter J. Kuznick, *The Decision to Risk the Future: Harry Truman, the Atomic Bomb and the Apocalyptic Narrative*, 2007, p.22

³ Jason Fritz, Hacking Nuclear Command and Control.”
cnnd.org/Documents/**Jason_Fritz_Hacking_NC2.doc**

Article IV of the Outer Space Treaty prohibits nuclear weapons on the moon and other celestial bodies. So Martians and other extra-territorial beings - if they exist - are protected.

There is some progress in the establishment of nuclear weapons free zones, and there are now six. However, these are not replacements for the practical task of eliminating nuclear weapons. And it will take superhuman efforts to establish nuclear weapons free zones in North America, the Arctic, or Europe, home to four nuclear weapons states.

We are – to a significant measure – protected from nuclear catastrophe by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – the NPT. This is the most important of the UN treaties because it is supported by 190 of the 193 member states of the United Nations, the greatest support of any United Nations Treaty. Only three states remain outside - Israel, India, Pakistan. North Korea a former member, has withdrawn but its status remains ambiguous.

Some history - In 1970, when the NPT came into force, there were five states with nuclear weapons. These states entered into a three-way bargain with the non-nuclear weapons states. ***The first part of the bargain*** was the commitment by these five states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals – not *eventually* eliminate but *eliminate* – it is not a distant aspiration! The Treaty forbids both horizontal and vertical proliferation, which means that those five states with nuclear weapons must neither add to, nor upgrade the capability of, their arsenals - ***and are committed to eliminating them.***

In exchange - the second part of the bargain - was the commitment by the non-nuclear weapons states to neither acquire nor develop nuclear weapons.

The third part of the bargain was that the non-nuclear weapons states, in exchange for their commitment to forgo nuclear weapons, would be given access to nuclear technology for peaceful uses of nuclear power. Because of the agreement to obtain technology for peaceful purposes, there are now some 32 nuclear-weapon-capable states.

In 1995 the NPT was extended indefinitely. In order to reach agreement for the Treaty's extension, a commitment was made to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of Mass Destruction, in the Middle East. At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, this commitment was renewed with agreement to hold a conference in 2012, to be convened by the United States, the UK and Russia.

Despite the political rhetoric, many of the commitments made at the United Nations remain unfulfilled.

In this particular instance a major difficulty is, first of all, that Israel – though it refuses to declare itself – is the only nuclear weapon state in the Middle East, and is not a member of the NPT. And secondly, Israel - is insisting on a broad conference agenda on regional security, conventional arms and confidence building, and has rejected the agenda developed by the Arab League States, which focussed specifically on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and related follow-up measures. The conference was postponed and no future date

established. This postponement had the support of the United States, but against the wishes of Russia, and according to Egypt – unilaterally.

Egypt walked out of the two-week 2015 NPT Preparatory Committee, last month in Geneva, because of this unfulfilled commitment. And it was not only because of this unfulfilled commitment! As His Excellency Ambassador Hisham Badr said, “*We cannot continue to attend meetings and agree on outcomes that do not get implemented, yet to be expected to abide by the concessions we gave for this outcome.*”⁴ Egypt, along with a majority of states, are deeply concerned that the nuclear weapons states maintain many of their nuclear weapons, targeted and on high alert status; and continue to modernize “their nuclear weapons, their delivery systems and related infrastructure.”⁵

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is becoming increasingly fragile for several reasons:

First, the nuclear weapons states – the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China - are not fulfilling their commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons. In the year 2000, these states committed to Article VI of the NPT which established 13 steps the states would undertake to achieve nuclear disarmament. Not only are these states instant-nuclear-war-ready, but as well, they are upgrading their arsenals, creating new capabilities for their nuclear weapons,⁶ and planning and budgeting for years ahead to continue to modernize their programmes for nuclear weapons, their delivery systems and the infrastructure required for their maintenance.

The five nuclear weapons states declined to participate in a conference on the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, hosted by the Government of Norway, last March and attended by 127 states. Concerns about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon use was part of the outcome document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference and a legitimate focus in fulfilling the goals of the NPT.

And last month in Geneva, at the NPT 2015 Prepcom, a joint statement of deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, presented by the delegate from South Africa on behalf of eighty member states – 75% of the states participating in this Prepcom – was rejected by the five nuclear weapons states and some of the states under the US nuclear umbrella. Astonishingly, Japan – whose citizens continue to suffer from the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - refused to sign.⁷

As well, at the United Nations General Assembly last October 12th, four of five nuclear weapons states (China abstained) were the only states to vote against Resolution 67/56, *Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations*. The purpose of this Resolution was to form an Open-ended Working Group to “develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons.” The rationale being that the

⁴ www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-for-npt 2013/statements: Egypt, April 29/2013

⁵ www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-for-npt/2013/statements: Egypt, April 29/2013

⁶ eg Adding new tail for tactical nuclear weapons

⁷ because the documents “stated that nuclear weapons should not be used under any circumstances. Ray Acheson, *A strategy for nuclear disarmament*, www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-for-npt/2013

Conference on Disarmament has been unable to agree on a programme of work since it was established fifteen years ago. The Resolution was adopted by the General Assembly with 134 Yes votes, 34 Abstentions, and the 4 No votes from nuclear weapon states, the U.S., U.K. France, Russia.

The above actions call into question the nuclear weapons states commitment to eliminate their arsenals. So it is understandable there was much dissatisfaction on the part of the non-nuclear weapons states at the 2013 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee last month.

The actions of North Korea are the second cause of the increasing fragility of the NPT. North Korea, as a member-state of the NPT, acquired nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, transformed it to manufacture nuclear weapons, then announced its withdrawal from the Treaty.

Because the Treaty lacks punitive measures for withdrawal, some states may find it tempting to follow North Korea's path. Iran is believed to be reconsidering its NPT commitments. However, it is a positive sign that Iran *has not* withdrawn from the NPT.

Because of a nuclear-armed Israel - which is thought to have 80 nuclear weapons - Middle East states, like Iraq and Libya sought - and now Iran is thought to be seeking - to acquire nuclear weapon capability. I understand that other Middle Eastern countries - Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States - are giving thought to their nuclear possibilities because their region is home to one nuclear-weapon-State.

Third: Egypt and other Arab League countries were *enticed* to join the NPT in 1995 with the promise that a zone free of nuclear weapons would be established in the Middle East. If this commitment to establish this zone is not fulfilled these countries may withdraw from the Treaty.⁸

I speak to you now as member state delegates to the United Nations. Please engage with these issues. Delegates from the nuclear weapons states must explain themselves, explain why they are not fulfilling their commitments. North Korea, too, owes explanation and justification for its continuing bellicosity which is disturbing the security of the Korean peninsula.

It would be useful for the delegate from Iran to shed some light onto its country's motivations. Is it Iran's intention to develop a nuclear weapon? Or is Iran playing a dangerous game with the I.A.E.A and United Nations?

And although I have not mentioned Pakistan, I call on the delegate from Pakistan to – in good faith – withdraw its opposition to the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty and thus allow the Conference on Disarmament – after 15 years - to finally agree on a programme of work.

⁸ www.pressenza.com/2013/05/don't-take-arabs-npt-membership...

The United Nations is a difficult, somewhat cumbersome, unwieldy vehicle – and is not always consistent or effective – but it is all we have. It is essential that we do our utmost to uphold the values it embodies; and to urge our governments to do likewise. And to ground the ideals and values of the United Nations into international law in order that we, our children, and our children's children may live in peace - and may live our lives in freedom - without fear.

I appeal to you now, to engage with the issue of nuclear disarmament in this event and, following this conference to continue to engage with this issue in your lives. I was a University student when my daughter began to have nightmares about nuclear war and so began my work to eliminate these weapons from the face of the earth. I am Founding Partner of Global Zero and I encourage you – if you have not already done so – to go to www.globalzero.org and sign on, join this movement - of predominantly university students - for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Most, if not all, the positive actions concerned with peace, freedom, justice and human dignity, have risen – like the phoenix from the ashes - the ashes of war, from the abominable acts of carnage and destruction. An appalling war-torn 19th century ended with the 1899 Hague Appeal for Peace Conference, from which emerged International Humanitarian Law.

The League of Nations, and the Permanent International Court of Justice, emerged from the bloodbath of World War I. The International Court of Justice,⁹ the Nuremberg Charter,¹⁰ and the United Nations,¹¹ arose in response to the carnage of World War II.

If there is a nuclear catastrophe - a nuclear war - there is little hope for such a renaissance; there will be little possibility for regeneration of the global human community; little hope that there will be enough life force from which can emerge another renewal of aspirations for a better world for humanity.

So, I commend you for your interest and concern for human kind; and I encourage you *to put to use* your energies and abilities in order to bring forward new thinking for resolution of these issues *because you are the future*. And I wish you well.

Thank you!
END

May 24th, 2013

⁹ June, 1945

¹⁰ August 1945

¹¹ signed June 26th, 1945, officially came into existence 24 October 1945