

May 2001

Summary Report

Towards NPT 2005: An Action Plan for the 13 Steps

A Strategy Consultation sponsored by the Middle Powers Initiative

April 29-May 1, 2001

United Nations, New York

Middle Powers Initiative

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MPI's Mission

MPI's unique mission is to influence and assist middle power governments to encourage and educate the nuclear weapon states to commit to immediate practical steps to reduce nuclear dangers and commence negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons.

In pursuit of this mission, MPI will continue to establish and develop effective relationships with middle power governments and relevant citizen organizations.

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MPI Strategy Consultation on NPT 13 Practical Steps

The Middle Powers Initiative (MPI) Strategy Consultation "Towards NPT 2005: An Action Plan for the 13 Steps" took place at the United Nations, New York, April 30 - May 1, 2001. Representatives of the seven New Agenda states (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden), the NATO Five (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway), plus Australia, Canada, China, and Japan as well as officials of the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs attended. MPI was represented by members of its International Steering Committee, and 16 other NGOs also attended.

The Chairman of MPI, Senator Douglas Roche, opened the proceedings with the introduction of a position paper on the implementation of the NPT 13 Steps. The paper was commissioned by MPI but written under the authority of its author, Dr. Tariq Rauf, Director of the International Organizations and Nonproliferation Program at the Monterey Institute for International Studies. Dr. Rauf presented the paper, which included recommendations for each step, as the framework for the Consultation's proceedings.

Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, formally opened the Consultation. Calling nuclear arms "a progressively lethal virus in the global body politic," he said the challenge for the disarmament community is to advance the "full implementation" of the NPT 13 Steps. He noted that in many cases, the prospects are "bleak" for many of the steps, including early entry-into-force of the CTBT and re-energizing the Conference on Disarmament. Dhanapala also noted the "warning signs" of other concerns, such as the possibility that some nuclear weapon states are working to develop new weapon systems in apparent contrast to the NPT's agreement on "a diminishing role for nuclear weapons." He reminded the audience that Secretary-General Kofi Annan's suggestion for an international conference to eliminate nuclear dangers is "a viable option to pursue, especially if a gap persists between the words and deeds of global nuclear disarmament."

Ambassador Abdallah Baali of Algeria, who was the President of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, welcomed the convening of this Consultation in order to assess the progress of the 13 Steps over its first year. He said that not much progress had been made, but that "shared optimism" leaves room for progress. He was concerned that the policies of the Bush Administration appear not to care about multilateral commitments, but urged those working for disarmament to "get on with their work." He maintained that the outcome of the NPT 2000 Review was a public promise made at the UN, insisting that "the 'unequivocal undertaking' is not ambiguous." He concluded that the commitments made must be respected.

Ambassador Henrik Salander of Sweden, a government in the New Agenda, said that after the NPT decision there was nothing to indicate that the 13 Steps would have a life beyond the Review Conference. When the New Agenda presented its draft resolution in the General Assembly in the autumn of 2000, "our goal was to re-enforce the NPT," he said. But it was a gamble because, he continued, it "exposed the NPT to some risk ... in order to extend the NPT commitments beyond the NPT mechanism itself." The overwhelming support for the resolution (it was adopted 154 to three, with eight abstentions) validated this approach. Noting the concern that the "unequivocal undertaking" can be seen as only words, he argued, "One year ago we did not even have the words, now we can use them."

Four non-governmental experts presented their overviews of the state of play in key capitals: Washington, Moscow, Ottawa and other NATO states.

Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr., President of the Lawyers Alliance for World Security in the United States, focused on the fissile material cut-off negotiations, START, CTBT entry into force, and the continued viability of the ABM Treaty as the necessary conditions for a strong NPT. But Graham stressed that the disarmament situation is "in fact quite grim," believing the record of the nuclear weapon states in implementing the 13 Steps has been "poor." He concluded that, because the US seems presently unprepared to lead in non-proliferation efforts on its own, the future of the world "may very well depend upon the ability of the allies, the New Agenda and other states to convince the US" to lead in efforts strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

Alexander Pikayev, Scholar in Residence at the Carnegie Moscow Center, said the Putin government has decided that the true threat to Russia "comes from the south and nuclear weapons are useless," therefore military procurement will shift from nuclear to conventional forces. He said the Soviet Union and Russia had made "enormous unilateral concessions" over 15 years, but because of US goals of dominating land, air, water, space and information, "the era of Russian unilateral concessions is over." While he said Bush's possible unilateral cuts "are not a bad idea," such cuts would not be verifiable or irreversible. He said under these circumstances, there will be no framework for US/Russian verification after START I expires in 2009.

Ambassador Christopher Westdal, of Canada, called the disarmament outlook "increasingly sober" and said US leadership was "utterly indispensable" in overcoming current setbacks. With NMD plans in mind, he offered five observations on President Bush's agenda: missile defense need not be incompatible with nuclear disarmament; we should welcome -- not "carp" about -- any announced unilateral cuts; it is a hard sell to paint missile defense as aggressive; "give these folks a chance" -- Republicans have been more successful than Democrats at arms control; and "reality intrudes... we are a long way and a long time away from deployed hardware."

Rebecca Johnson, Executive Director of the Acronym Institute in London, assessed the impact of the NPT 2000 Review Conference commitments on NATO. Judging from NATO's December 2000 report that reiterated the essential role of nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future, she concluded the impact was "none." She argued that NATO was apparently seeking to manage the nuclear status quo, and set out a five-point strategy to pressure the Alliance into action. It included: seeking a NATO plan of action in response to the 13 Steps; taking up the issue of withdrawing tactical nuclear weapons from Europe; pursuing NATO's own proposals for increased transparency; bolstering security assurances by challenging NATO's continued ambiguity of when nuclear weapons could be used; and, challenging nuclear sharing.

Richard Butler, former Australian Ambassador and current Diplomat in Residence at the Council on Foreign Relations, spoke as a panelist at a Public Dialogue the evening before the Consultation. He stressed that the profound implications of nuclear weapons for international peace must be truly understood by remarking that "the problem with nuclear weapons is nuclear weapons." He argued the policies of the NPT's nuclear weapon states, the nuclear powers outside the Treaty and the "recalcitrant" non-nuclear members of the NPT all point to the fact that "nuclear weapons have a secure future." Pointing to the centrality of the United States in dealing with these problems, he said any changes must come from changes in public opinion in the US and other western countries.

Two members of the MPI International Steering Committee, Jonathan Granoff and Robert Green, also spoke at this session. Granoff warned that the Bush Administration's promotion of a ballistic missile defense is a first step towards what the US Space Command calls "full spectrum dominance" of outer space. Green noted that a positive aspect of the Bush Administration's plan is that it "ensures the nuclear weapons issue will come back to the top of the agenda" of public policy.

As a result of these presentations and discussions, a list Principal Points (published below) emerged as an action plan of utmost importance to the Consultation's participants. *

* Note: a full report on the MPI Consultation is to be published at a later date.

Principal Points

- **DE-ALERTING (Step 9D)**

The persisting launch-on-warning status of some 5,000 US and Russian nuclear warheads is irresponsible and unacceptable, especially in light of US President Bush's statement May 1, 2001 that "we are not and must not be strategic adversaries." The goal should be global zero alert. The US should make this a central element of its Nuclear Posture Review, being prepared to take into account the asymmetrical nature of their respective strategic nuclear forces, and offering major proposals for the removal of all strategic nuclear warheads from what President Bush described as "hair-trigger alert."

- **PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN THE ABM TREATY (Step 7)**

The ABM Treaty must be preserved and strengthened, because of the potentially grave consequences for the whole treaty regime underpinning nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament – and thus for global security – if it is abrogated. Following President Bush's May 1 speech, this becomes more urgent. His clear intention to proceed with multi-layered ballistic missile defence risks reviving a nuclear arms race and stimulating the weaponisation of outer space. Strong interest was expressed, therefore, for a proposal that a group of like-minded states establish a conference outside the CD with a mandate to prepare and start negotiating a Treaty to Prevent War in Space.

- **UNILATERALISM VERSUS THE RULE OF LAW (Steps 7, 9A, 9C)**

The treaty-based approach to nuclear disarmament must be continued and reinforced, not abandoned. Recent US resistance to this approach, evidenced by Senate rejection of the CTBT and expressed willingness to abrogate the ABM Treaty if necessary, must be reversed, especially in the wider context of its uncooperative stance towards such treaties as the Kyoto Climate Change Protocol. However, unilateral disarmament steps can be productive if they are carried out to support, not undermine, the rule of law.

Thus, President Bush's stated intention in his May 1 speech to "move quickly to reduce nuclear forces" is welcome, echoing the mutual unilateral cuts in 1991 by his father and Gorbachev. However, unilateral cuts in nuclear weapons outside the framework of international treaties lack transparency and verifiability, which raises the possibility of reversion. It is important, therefore, that unilateral cuts be followed by transparency and verification measures, which should be codified as part of the disarmament treaty process.

- **IRREVERSIBILITY (Steps 5,6)**

Signatory states should insist that the unequivocal undertaking made by the NWS (Step 6) includes an understanding that the gains made in nuclear disarmament cannot be reversed by possible destruction of the non-proliferation regime following deployment of a US missile defence system. The principle of irreversibility should be applied to all cuts, including, in particular, the 1991 US/Russia unilateral reductions and dismantling of non-strategic nuclear weapons, systems covered by the START regime, and those removed from service by the UK and France. As part of this process, the work of nuclear weapons laboratories should be redirected to verification and dismantling.

- **NON-STRATEGIC NUCLEAR WEAPONS (Step 9C)**

There is an urgent need to address the serious problem of non-strategic nuclear weapons, which are most likely to be used first. Suggestions included: supporting a UN resolution focusing on this issue; pressure for all such nuclear weapons to be withdrawn to their possessors' national territory; codification of the 1991 Bush/Gorbachev declarations; establishment of a register with a view to much greater transparency and verification on numbers; and inclusion of them either in START III or a new global treaty.

- **NO TESTING, BRING CTBT INTO FORCE (Steps 2, 1)**

All NPT member states are politically bound by the 2000 NPT Review Conference Final Document, which called for a moratorium on nuclear explosions pending the entry into force (EIF) of the CTBT. This was strongly endorsed, with a call for high-level ministerial participation – especially by the New Agenda and NATO 5 - at the EIF conference in New York September 25-27, 2001. A demand needs to come from that conference to the major holdout, the US, to ratify, without which little progress will be made. Meanwhile, pressure should be increased to close the test sites in the US, Russia and China (France has closed its site in the South Pacific).

- **INVENTORY OF ALL FISSILE MATERIALS (Steps 3, 10)**

To help unblock the start of negotiations for a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), support was given to pressing for the establishment of an inventory of all weapons-usable fissile materials (plus Tritium) which would comprise a register and database. To this end, assistance should be sought from leading non-governmental agencies, such as ISIS and VERTIC, which would provide the leadership and expertise needed to kick-start the initiative. It was noted that the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs has a budget for a weapons of mass destruction database, of which this could form a part. It was proposed that informal meetings between NGOs

and supportive governments should be arranged as soon as possible, with a view to preparing a message for delivery in September, 2001 to the UNGA.

- **STANDARDISED REPORTING (Steps 12, 6, 9F)**

There is a need for the NWS to be required to present reports to the NPT PrepComs in a standardised way, which should be devised as soon as possible (perhaps by the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs with assistance from NGOs). Their reports should be annual, with specific criteria (e.g. number of weapons cut/dismantled, budgets, de-alerting), and covering intentions as well as achievements. Such reports should be linked to: their unequivocal undertaking (Step 6), in that it cannot be indefinitely deferred; Step 9F under which all the NWS are required to be engaged as soon as appropriate; and the final, unanimous subparagraph 105f of the 1996 World Court Advisory Opinion. Similar reports should also be demanded nationally in the NWS for annual presentation to parliaments.

- **URGENCY (All Steps)**

Ways should be pursued to convey a sharper sense of urgency to the nuclear disarmament process, built around the need to raise awareness that the central problem of nuclear weapons is the mindset of those possessing them. Following reports that some nuclear weapon states were suggesting that nothing had changed with their agreement to the 2000 NPT Review Final Document, widely-supported suggestions included: encouraging the UN Secretary-General's proposal for a global conference to eliminate nuclear dangers (this could be pursued if the 2002 NPT PrepCom ends in deadlock, and be planned to uphold, rather than threaten, the NPT); the NA should raise their profile to Presidential/Prime Ministerial level; leading middle power governments could engage directly with the US public (for example, Sweden's Prime Minister Olof Palme did this over Vietnam, and helped establish the Six Nation Initiative); and both governments and civil society should contribute to the ongoing UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

- **NEW CONFERENCES (All Steps)**

As an integral part of the need to inject urgency into nuclear disarmament, several suggestions were supported for new conferences and new use of bodies outside the existing framework of the NPT process and CD. Some examples included: using the G8 Summits to address the nuclear disarmament crisis; a conference of NWFZ signatory states plus Mongolia to strengthen NWFZs and provide a forum for new initiatives; holding seminars on the margins of the CD to advance technical aspects pending agreement by the CD of a subsidiary body on nuclear disarmament.