

Article VI Forum

Securing the Future: Strengthening the NPT

Introductory Statement

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The Hague, March 2, 2006

When the Middle Powers Initiative convened the first meeting of the Article VI Forum October 3, 2005 at the United Nations, New York, we were greatly encouraged at the strong endorsement given this new initiative by the 28 participating States. Your presence in The Hague for this two-day meeting signifies your belief that like-minded States can forge a path to ending the present crisis in the non-proliferation/disarmament regime. MPI thanks you for coming together in this creative setting. Tomorrow's discussions will be convened at The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, "Clingendael," the home of our co-host, whom we thank for this privilege.

We are greatly honoured to have former Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers of The Netherlands and former Prime Minister Kim Campbell of Canada participating; also former Minister of Disarmament Marian Hobbs of New Zealand and former Secretary of State for Science and Technology Jose Goldemberg of Brazil; former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Nobuyasu Abe; and the distinguished Ambassadors and other high officials of governments and the International Atomic Energy Agency. The parliamentarians here will enhance our discussions. It is also a pleasure to welcome Frank Von Hippel and his colleagues from the International Panel on Fissile Materials, the representatives of leading

civil society groups and, of course, my own colleagues in the Middle Powers Initiative and the Global Security Institute.

Despite the institutional and procedural problems we face in the nuclear disarmament agenda – problems well known to this gathering – MPI believes that the international community stands on the threshold of the construction of a viable plan leading to a nuclear weapons-free world.

Consider the elements on which there was wide support at the 2005 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty:

- Nuclear Weapon States must stop nuclear sharing for military purposes under any kind of security arrangements;
- The most effective way to prevent nuclear terrorism is the total elimination of nuclear weapons;
- International action to stop proliferation is essential;
- Building upon the decisions taken at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, including the “unequivocal undertaking” for total nuclear disarmament, no new nuclear weapons should be developed;
- Anticipating the early entry-into-force of the CTBT, the moratorium on testing should be maintained;

- The Nuclear Weapons States must respect existing commitments regarding security assurances pending the conclusion of multilaterally negotiated legally binding security assurances for non-nuclear States Parties to the Treaty;
- Nuclear weapons-free zones strengthen the non-proliferation regime and deserve to receive security assurances;
- Assurances are not applicable if any beneficiary is in material breach of its own non-proliferation and disarmament obligations.

In addition, there were many practical and popular proposals for making progress in specific areas. These proposals, put forward in working papers by States and groups of States – if given their proper due – would do much to strengthen the Treaty that all States Parties say they want to survive. Opposition by a small number of States cannot diminish the value of this work.

There is, then, a solid basis for stating that a viable plan for progress in nuclear disarmament exists. We are close to having a common vision for the way forward.

The present opposition to this plan must not be allowed to dissuade like-minded States from action. The leaders and officials of these governments along with knowledgeable leaders of civil society understand

that the day will arrive when either nuclear weapons are eliminated or the world will be devastated by a nuclear attack. One or the other will happen. No objective person, informed on the gravity of the situation, can deny it.

Our common humanity, our common fate, our common vision compel us, at a minimum, to strengthen the non-proliferation/disarmament regime. This requires us to protect the integrity of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Taking a lead from ideas advanced at the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the Article VI Forum's first meeting opened up a new approach: to examine key legal, political and technical issues that need to be addressed to overcome security concerns of the Nuclear Weapons States, which are currently preventing them from commencing negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament.

Thus, the program for this meeting invites, in this morning's session, expert discussion on "Legal Requirements to Achieve Non-Proliferation and Disarmament"; this afternoon we will consider in depth "Technical Bases for a Production Cutoff and Stockpile Reductions of Nuclear Weapons Materials"; tomorrow we will take up "Political Requirements to Meet the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Bargain."

This work – on legal, technical and political elements of nuclear disarmament – has value in its own right. But it will also serve to improve the prospects for a successful Review Conference of the NPT in 2010 by increasing over-all understanding of the essential elements of security. The report of this consultation, containing any proposals and initiatives that may arise, will be sent to all governments for their consideration as States Parties to the NPT begin a new round of preparatory meetings in 2007.

The Article VI Forum is still very new. One could compare it to a tender plant that has poked its head above the soil in springtime; it needs to be nourished in order to grow. At the invitation of the Government of Canada, a third meeting of the Article VI Forum will be held in Ottawa September 28-29, 2006. There MPI hopes to refine workable ideas that may come out of the present meeting. That is why we have included on the present agenda a session on “What Non-Nuclear States Can Do to Move the Disarmament/Non-Proliferation Agenda Forward.” The Article VI Forum is very much rooted in the present even as we look at future possibilities.

The Article VI Forum, at the moment, can be characterized as a consultation of like-minded States seeking to find a way forward in a non-combative atmosphere. At some stage, it may be advisable to invite the

Nuclear Weapons States into the Forum. The Middle Powers Initiative wishes to hear the views of the like-minded States on the efficacy and timing of such an invitation. That is why we have scheduled the final plenary to discuss “Strategies for Moving the Article VI Forum Forward.” Your views are very important to us.

Finally, the very existence of the Article VI Forum is a sign of hope for the world community that wants to be freed from the spectre of nuclear warfare. Key States assembled here can indeed provide a jolt of energy into the nuclear disarmament process.

In this current cycle of history, some might argue that only minimal progress toward achieving the elimination of nuclear weapons is being made. Actually, the Middle Powers Initiative believes that a historical momentum is building up. Though the obstacles are formidable, nuclear proponents are finding that they have less and less ground to stand on to justify retention. The vast majority of world public opinion favours nuclear disarmament. The creative development of ideas at the Article VI Forum will send a positive message to a waiting world that serious work is being done to help humanity attain a nuclear weapons-free world.