



Remarks to the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Affairs

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Ambassador Istvan Gyarmati, Chair. Distinguished members of the Advisory Board.

It is my pleasure to join you at the opening of your 64th session.

At the outset, I would like to convey the best wishes of the Secretary-General, who looks forward to meeting you tomorrow. I also want to express my appreciation for the leadership Ambassador Gyarmati has shown in guiding the work of this board.

I also wanted to thank each of you – distinguished Board members – for your service, for taking the time from your professional commitments and for your willingness to grapple with the most pressing disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

Distinguished Board Members,

Since last you met, there have been several important developments in the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. I would like to update you on the following three issues.

First, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held its 2010 Review Conference in May. As you all know, the Review Conference was unable to achieve a consensus outcome.

The conference highlighted the increasing division between States parties over the future of nuclear disarmament. It also demonstrated the absence of a common vision for achieving a Middle East Zone free of Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The Review Conference's outcome was disappointing. But it is in the past. Now it is essential that we look to the future and work collectively to overcome these divisions and ensure the NPT's integrity as a central pillar of our collective security.

The 2020 NPT Review Conference will mark fifty years since the Treaty entered into force. It is my sincere hope that over the coming review cycle, States parties will find an accommodation that will lead to greater disarmament progress and a stronger nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The second issue is conventional arms.

In the first week of June, the Second Open-ended Meeting of Governmental Experts on the Programme of Action took place in New York.

The meeting examined recent developments in small arms and light weapon technology. Its focus on emerging technology such as 3D printing of weapons and fingerprint technology demonstrated how these technologies can both hinder and aid the task of regulating the global arms trade.

Most importantly, the meeting showed how the United Nations can stay ahead of the curve when it comes to addressing new and emerging weapon technology.

The third issue is the Syrian chemical weapons file.

The terrible conflict in Syria continues to haunt us. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission on the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons completed its mandate last year. This initiative was, as the Secretary-General said, a bright spot amid truly dark circumstances.

Unfortunately, challenges remain. The destruction of twelve former chemical weapons production facilities has yet to be completed. Syria must clarify its declaration and its subsequent amendments. We await the findings of the OPCW mission investigating the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

My office continues to engage with the OPCW and the Syrian authorities and I continue to ensure the Security Council is briefed on the implementation of resolution 2118. This is an issue to which I attach the highest priority.

Now I'd like to turn to the agenda before you. Your agenda is once again comprised of timely and weighty issues in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. If I may, I would like bring some of my own perspective to these issues.

The first item – the role of arms control in managing conflicts – is, in my opinion, one that is undervalued. We should not forget that, often, it is the unchecked availability of weapons that fuels violent conflict. From Mali to Iraq, unregulated weapons fire the state-to-state and internecine conflicts that threaten regional stability.

We should also remember that, throughout history, arms control agreements have played a crucial role in defusing conflicts. They act as confidence-building measures, providing the space to bring combatants to the negotiating table.

The Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action are important tools at the international community's disposal. However, we must continue our efforts to safeguard against the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of conventional weapons.

Improving government accountability is crucial to ensuring that arms used for legitimate purposes are not diverted to nefarious purposes.

In this context, there is an overlap with your second item. We increasingly live in a world of *intra* not *inter* State conflict. Powerful non-state actors flout international law, cross borders and foment strife with disastrous humanitarian consequences.

Non-state actors abuse and manipulate cyberspace to promote terrorism and incite violence. They must be held accountable.

They are enabled, in large part, by access to the illicit arms trade or weapons diverted from legitimate transfers.

As an international community, the onus is upon us to deliver robust measures to prevent non-state actors gaining access to all types of weapons – from guns and ammunition to new and emerging technologies.

And we must remain vigilant in guarding against the terrifying prospect of a non-state actor acquiring a weapon of mass destruction.

Your third agenda item – the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons – was a central topic of debate during the NPT Review Conference. 110 States parties’ supported Austria’s pledge to ‘fill the legal gap’ on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. This is clear evidence that the issue remains important to many States parties.

A world free of nuclear weapons is a goal to which we all aspire. Narrowing divergence in how to achieve that goal should be a priority for us all. Unfortunately, it is still unclear how we will accomplish this. I welcome all endeavors that carry us further up this mountain.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the thoughtfulness you have attached to your role as UNIDIR’s Board of Trustees. This institution has a unique role within the disarmament machinery.

I appreciated the frank exchange of views yesterday about possible next steps to bring UNIDIR back on a sound financial footing. With your oversight, I have no doubt that UNIDIR will retain its position as a provider of high quality, independent research.

The Secretary-General has stated clearly that: “Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are not utopian ideals. They are critical to global peace and security”.

I look forward to working with you as we pursue this cause for a safer and more secure world.