

Secretary-General's remarks on "Future of Multilateral Disarmament" at New York University [as delivered]

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New York

22 November 2016

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to have this opportunity to share some thoughts on my hope and what the United Nations has been doing on arms control and disarmament with distinguished professors and students here today.

You have helped to prepare future generations to address global challenges through multilateral cooperation.

Your outstanding teaching and research have deepened the public's understanding of the work of the United Nations.

And I salute you all for all of this and much more – what you have been doing and continue to do.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to focus on the future of multilateral disarmament. Quite simply, disarmament is facing a crisis. This afternoon, I want to outline a number of steps to help put the process back on track.

That need is ever more urgent as we scan the security horizon around the world.

Every day, we are confronted with the stories of indiscriminate bombardment of civilians, more allegations of the use of chemical weapons, ceaseless development and even testing of nuclear weapons, even in the 21st century.

I am more convinced than ever that a fresh start in disarmament will strengthen our overall system of international peace and security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Disarmament is a topic long associated with the United Nations.

For me, the issue is also deeply personal.

My own country – the Republic of Korea – experienced the ravages of war in 1950 and continues to face threats from nuclear weapons, missiles, and ballistic missiles and many other conventional arms.

It borders the only country – the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, normally we [call it the] DPRK – which has conducted a nuclear test in this century. And the DPRK continues to build up its ballistic missiles, imperiling regional security and threatening global security.

As a foreign service officer, during my time, I have been deeply involved in promoting the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, CTBT. I served as the second Chairman of this CTBT when I was stationed in Vienna. And I had been involved in this announcing the historic joint declaration between the Republic of Korea and DPRK on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which was adopted on 31 December 1991, which was ratified in February 1992. Thereafter, I participated in

implementing this joint declaration on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but unfortunately, we have not been able to do that.

In my time in the United Nations as the Secretary-General, as I was introduced by Dean [Dennis] Di Lorenzo, I was the first UN Secretary-General to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At that time, I did not know that the United States Ambassador to Japan has not even visited there in such a long time, six decades, longer than six decades after this nuclear weapons were dropped. Only when the Secretary-General of the United Nations wanted to visit, at that time, for the first time, the US Ambassador just came to Hiroshima. I could not understand it at that time.

Now, this year, during the G7 Summit, [United States] President [Barack] Obama paid tribute to all the victims. That was, I think a big history. Therefore, I and President Obama made a historic visit to this place.

I also traveled to the tragic nuclear accident [sites of] Chernobyl and Fukushima, Japan, and I was introduced, I was the first person, the first world leader, not to mention Secretary-General of the United Nations, no world leaders have ever visited Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan. I was so horrified when I was standing in the middle of this Semipalatinsk. Because of time constraints, I am not going to go into detail about how I felt.

As I was introduced, I [decided], for the first time, again, to establish an expert level investigation team into the use of chemical weapons in Syria. I appointed the very distinguished expert scholar Åke Sellström of Sweden. You must have heard this name. That triggered a series of events resulting in unprecedented international action to eliminate that country's chemical weapons programme.

In 2008, very early in my tenure, I put forward a five-point plan to revitalize the international disarmament agenda based on key principles.

First, disarmament must enhance security.

Second, disarmament must be reliably verified.

Third, disarmament must be rooted in legal obligations.

And fourth, disarmament must be visible to the public.

And fifth, disarmament must anticipate emerging dangers from conventional weapons.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the history of the United Nations, disarmament has been approached on two separate tracks.

The first track relies on a so-called "comprehensive" effort to address all major disarmament challenges in a single integrated framework.

This school of thought teaches that all disarmament issues are linked. For example, negotiations over nuclear and conventional weapons should take place in parallel.

The second track has focused on what have been called "partial measures," which is an incremental or piecemeal approach to disarmament.

For example, before negotiating an elimination of nuclear weapons, you must first have a cessation of the arms race, an end to nuclear testing, a gradual sequenced reduction of nuclear stockpiles – the list goes on, one building block at a time.

This may be seen as a practical [solution], before you can have a comprehensive nuclear deal.

One novel variation has been the recent initiative to negotiate a treaty to prohibit nuclear

weapons, a measure that its supporters believe will contribute to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, there is a deep division among Member States over which steps would prove most fruitful.

On the one hand, nuclear-weapon States, along with many of their allies, argue that they have taken steps to reduce their arsenals.

On the other hand, non-nuclear-weapon States point to the lack of disarmament negotiations, the persistence of thousands of nuclear weapons, and plans for modernizing existing nuclear arsenals decades into the future with costs that run well over \$1 trillion.

This is a huge amount of money. I have been arguing that just a fraction of \$1 trillion would have been enough for the Sustainable Development Goals to be implemented. We can also easily address climate change implementation to help developing countries. We have been working since 2009 to mobilize \$100 billion that we have targeted by 2020. It is an 11-year plan to mobilize \$100 billion. Now we are talking about \$1 trillion – just imagine all these stockpiles and improving their capacities.

We have achieved some progress in outlawing certain specific weapons like cluster munitions and landmines, as well as success in negotiating a conventional Arms Trade Treaty. Again, we see while there are many disappointing and frustrating processes, we have seen recently some positive things.

The Arms Trade Treaty, we negotiated [it], I think, for two years, finally on the second year we were able to have this agreement signed and the following year it was ratified. It became effective.

We saw such a thing with climate change. After 20 years of negotiation, it gathered speed and we made it happen, and on 4 November of this year, we got the Paris Agreement to enter into force.

There have been caps on numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons, the closure of several nuclear test sites, and a halt to the production of fissile material for weapons, in most possessor States at least.

But persistent differences over disarmament have led to frustrating, and, I would add, shameful results.

The UN disarmament machinery is locked in chronic stalemate.

Perhaps nothing better illustrates this failure than the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. As Secretary-General, since the first year, I have been going to Geneva many times and addressing the Conference on Disarmament.

You would be surprised – [for] over two decades, they have not been able to adopt the programme of work. Can you believe it? Not to mention, let alone the lack of progress in the work. They have not been able to adopt an agenda. Twenty year, this has existed, and I have been warning them: If you behave this way, we will have to bring the discussions in the Conference on Disarmament, we will have to bring them to some other venue, but they don't listen... Because of the consensus system, just one country can block the whole 193 Member States. This is a totally unacceptable situation.

The costs of allowing this kind of a status quo, non-action – they are still persistent. This is very frustrating.

Chronic increases in military expenditures. Out-of-control arms races. New regional

instabilities. Enhanced risks of proliferation. Growing mistrust among nations. And potential catastrophic terrorist threats from non-State actors.

Diplomacy and dialogue can work to solve sensitive security problems, like the historic agreement on the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Even while this deal remains in its infancy, we must guard against cynicism and focus on ensuring that the agreement lives up to our highest expectations. You cannot expect in our real world the perfect agreement, perfect treaty.

Despite some challenges and weaknesses, sustaining this agreement is the best way to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme remains peaceful.

This may be my answer, if asked, to some of the debate which are now being discussed immediately after this Presidential election.

Yet, in the absence of more general progress in this field, more intractable problems such as the irresponsible and reckless nuclear and missile activities of the DPRK – this will only grow.

This will not only undermine regional peace and security but also imperil much of the fragile progress we have made in building strong norms against nuclear weapons.

There is a better way – and I would like to offer one today. It is based on the long-accepted goal of disarmament as a means to ensure human survival and eliminate the danger of war.

Building on my 2008 5-point proposal, I believe the world needs to see action in five specific areas to achieve sustainable security through the progressive demilitarization of international affairs. The goal is an international system that truly ensures the peaceful resolution of disputes – as called for in the UN Charter – rather than the use of force.

First, let me say, the priority must remain the elimination of nuclear weapons, which continues to pose an existential threat to humanity. States must find a clearly defined and time-bound framework to achieve this, either through a nuclear weapons convention or a set of mutually reinforcing instruments.

Fundamental questions have been raised.

How will a prohibition treaty help induce nuclear possessors to move toward elimination?

Why is it so difficult to delegitimize nuclear weapons in the same manner as other weapons of mass destruction such as chemical and biological weapons?

Humanity deserves satisfactory answers to these questions.

Both nuclear and non-nuclear States must work to narrow differences and to find common ground. Ultimately, reaching this universal objective will require comprehensive, inclusive, interactive and constructive approaches.

In this regard, the Russian Federation and the United States – who together hold the largest nuclear arsenals, I think 95 per cent of declared nuclear weapons are in the hands of these two countries – they must resume a real dialogue on reducing all types of nuclear weapons. In the meantime, all States should pursue policies that are fully compatible with the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

Second, beyond the challenge of nuclear disarmament, we must strive for the universality of instruments aimed at stemming the growing risk of terrorism using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials. It is time for a new push for universal membership in the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions.

It is an affront to the conscience of humankind that chemical weapons continue to exist, let alone are actually being used, as we have so tragically witnessed in Syria. Still, we have all this allegations that chemical weapons are still being used. And I am very happy to see that the Security Council has extended the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism by another one year.

Third, the Security Council must fulfill its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by addressing the real and present challenges posed by weapons of mass destruction. We need unity in confronting this menace. Those who violate the non-proliferation commitments set by the Council or use chemical or other inhumane weapons must be held accountable. There must be no impunity. The Council must also fulfil its broader mandate in relation to disarmament and arms regulation. Number four, the international community must embrace the humanitarian, human rights, social and economic imperatives for disarmament and arms regulation, building on our progress in outlawing inhumane weapons and adopting the Arms Trade Treaty. This includes enhancing protection of civilians by ending the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, facilitating sustainable development and peace by eradicating the illicit arms trade. As I have often said, the world is over-armed and peace is underfunded. You must have heard my repetition of this catchphrase. I am going to repeat again: The world is over-armed and peace is underfunded.

The objective of security should be reoriented toward purely defensive capabilities and the fulfillment of peacekeeping responsibilities.

Number five, we must widen the scope to include other emerging technologies with potentially destabilizing military applications. These include armed drones, cyber weapons, space weapons, new types of biological weapons made through genetic engineering, strategic missile defense capabilities, and other technologies such as autonomous weapons. The best time to achieve our goals is before an arms race begins, rather than after it is too late.

The approach that I have outlined today, these five approaches, can help move us closer to our shared dream of achieving all the solemn goals of the UN Charter with respect to international peace and security, and not just in the field of disarmament.

For ten years, I have strived to advance such goals as Secretary-General. Soon, I will turn over these responsibilities to my very able successor, Antonio Guterres.

I urge you to give him full support and cooperation and also to the United Nations, toward this great cause of disarmament.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished professors,

Together, let us continue until we reach our destination: a world free of nuclear weapons, a world free of all weapons of mass destruction or massive disruption, and a world that is safer, more secure and better for all the people.

I thank you for your attention. Thank you.