



Statement to the First Committee of the General Assembly

*Exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other
high-level officials in the field of arms control and disarmament*

By

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Our panel today will consist of an exchange between my distinguished colleagues—Ambassador Grace Asirwatham, the Deputy Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW); Mr. Jarmo Sareva, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament (CD); Mr. Geoffrey Shaw, Representative of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the United Nations; and Dr. Genxin Li, Director of the Legal and External Relations Division of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

In my remarks at last year's First Committee panel of high-level officials, I cited a comment by Salvador de Madariaga, my distant predecessor in the Secretariat of the League of Nations. He pointed out that the real challenge of disarmament relates to the degree of organization within the world community. He viewed the term "organization" not as an institution, but as a process involving many institutions and even the wider public at large.

The institutions represented on this panel are active participants in such a process. The goals they pursue are multilateral in nature. The norms they seek to cultivate and strengthen are intended to be truly universal in scope. For precisely these reasons, these institutions—while separate from the United Nations—have established close working relations with the UN Secretariat. So while there is a division of labour in addressing disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control in this world, there is also very much of a spirit of common cause.

We saw this most strikingly this year by the rapid emergence of a collaborative team effort by the OPCW and the UN to assist in the implementation of Syria's responsibilities as a new party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The many complexities of undertaking these functions amidst the horrors of a brutal civil war cannot be overstated. Yet we are already starting to see some of the fruits of this collaboration. We have already achieved great progress in the transparency of Syria's chemical weapons capabilities and we are putting in place a reliable system for the verification and destruction of that deadly arsenal. As a result, the global norms against the use or very existence of such weapons have undoubtedly been strengthened. Today, the same number of states have joined the CWC as have joined the NPT.

Unfortunately, progress in the field of disarmament is rarely either steady or evenly distributed. It has, for example, been another disappointing year for the Conference on Disarmament, which once again was not able to fulfil its role as the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. While it was also unable to adopt a programme of work, the CD did establish an Informal Working Group with a mandate to produce one and its informal consultations may continue in the 2013-2014 intersession period. It is encouraging that diplomatic efforts are underway to revive the CD as a unique component in the multilateral disarmament machinery, but it is still not possible to predict their outcome.

Of the institutions represented on this panel, the UN has had its longest relationship with the IAEA, which was established when Dag Hammarskjöld was Secretary-General. This year marks the 60th anniversary of President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech in the General Assembly, which led to the creation of the IAEA in 1957. Through its work in promoting and safeguarding peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in advancing nuclear science and technology, and in seeking to improve the safety and security of nuclear materials, the Agency has contributed significantly to international peace and security—which precisely is why it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 along with its Director General. Relations between the UN and the IAEA are excellent, including at the working level of our respective secretariats.

The idea of international organization as a process is also illustrated by the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. While the treaty has still not yet entered into force, the CTBTO has already made impressive achievements in establishing a robust international system to detect nuclear explosions of virtually any size, virtually anywhere. The expert former director of the organization's International Data Centre, Dr. Lassina Zerbo, has now become the Commission's Executive Secretary. I am sure his Organization has the support and best wishes of all delegations as it confronts the challenges ahead of bringing the treaty into force and implementing it globally. I welcome Dr. Genxin Li upon his first appearance before this Committee.

To a large extent, the future of each of our organizations will be determined by the professionalism of our work, the information and expertise we possess, and the efficiency and effectiveness of our management—in short, how we function as bureaucracies. Yet that future will also be conditioned by many unpredictable events and developments. Most importantly, our futures will be determined by decisions and actions of our Member States, who create our mandates, provide available resources, and monitor closely the implementation of our work.

The most auspicious environment for our organizations would arise if over the years ahead we find new and expanding coalitions of states sharing a strong common commitment to advance disarmament goals. The closer the alignment of priorities, policies, and practices of states, the stronger will be the foundation in political will to help our organizations to function as they should. The work of this Committee will provide important indicators of whether we are facing a renaissance of multilateral disarmament, or a new dark age of fragmentation and decline. Given the stakes involved, there really is no choice. We must move forward.