



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

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High Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament

Closing Segment

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Honorable Heads of State and Government,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We now bring this High-level meeting on nuclear disarmament to a close with a renewed commitment to the values of the Charter, and the vision of this Organization's forefathers to live in a world governed by our shared commitment to international peace and security.

We have heard many insightful, sometime diverging views, on how we can seek a safer world for all, a world free of nuclear weapons.

Today, 74 Heads of State and Government, Ministers and Representatives have spoken, some with quite impassioned statements, to reiterate their resolve to eliminate nuclear weapons from this planet. This high-level of participation demonstrates the determination of Member States to pursue our global efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Let me also acknowledge the determined commitment of civil society, which has played and continues to play an important role in shaping the disarmament agenda. The statements made by their representatives are a welcome voice in this discussion.

While there is broad consensus on achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, it is clear that there are differences or even opposing views among Member States on how to advance this shared common objective. Let me remind members, that while opposing views are normal and to be expected, we cannot and must not let them deter us from our overarching goal seeking to live free from the threat of large-scale destruction by nuclear weapons. So I ask you: what immediate steps can we take to move us closer to this shared goal?

A summary of this meeting will be circulated in the upcoming weeks, but please let me highlight some key points:

Delegations expressed a number of concerns today.

Despite achievements in bilateral and unilateral arms reductions, the total number of nuclear weapons deployed and in stockpiles still amounts to thousands. The use of these weapons whether intentionally or accidentally, would have a devastating humanitarian and environmental impact.

Many have expressed disappointment with the lack of political will to agree on issues that can be taken forward in the Conference on Disarmament. This is one of the underlying reasons for calling this High Level Meeting.

Delegations have underlined that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and should be pursued simultaneously, and – as some have underscored - by all States, including by those outside the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

A number of States have indicated their frustration with the slow pace in the area of nuclear disarmament. They have also pointed out that this lack of progress may be detrimental to the success of the 2015 NPT Review Conference and the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Some nuclear-weapon States underlined the principle that undertaking effective nuclear disarmament measures is a shared responsibility and that all States must cooperate to create the conditions and environment in which the goal of disarmament and non-proliferation can be pursued with respect to the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency.

We have also heard many constructive suggestions on how to move the nuclear disarmament agenda forward.

Members continue to call for the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the beginning of negotiations on a fissile material treaty.

A number of delegations called for a Nuclear Weapons Convention prohibiting the possession, development production, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons, leading to their destruction.

Fulfilling the agreement to convene the conference to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction without further delay was also emphasized by a number of States.

Finally, we heard suggestions to dedicate 26 September as the international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as well as to convene a High-level International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament in five years to review progress following this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Global Nuclear disarmament not only contributes to a safer world, it can also free important resources to be redirected towards development efforts and the eradication of poverty. It is a global public good of the highest order to which we are all obliged in the interests of humanity.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The journey of the United Nations began plagued by the same threat that we now discuss today. Not only have we lagged in our efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, we have veered even further off course.

In 1961, US President John F. Kennedy immortalized this threat with the following words in our very own General Assembly (quote) “Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident, or miscalculation, or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.” (end quote) These sentiments, expressed eloquently here, have no doubt been reiterated in the halls of our Organization countless times by countless voices.

Let us heed the warning, and begin the process of freeing our world of nuclear weapons. Let us begin now.

I thank you for your participation today and I look forward to working with you on this agenda throughout the 68th session.
