



World Chronicle

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Fighting the Spread of Nuclear Weapons

The landmark international treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) dates back to 1970, but is reviewed every five years. In 2005, some observers say, it will face some of its toughest tests ever.

Is the international framework for dealing with nuclear threats in danger of erosion? What safeguards are there for non-nuclear states to pursue nuclear technology for peaceful use? Does the threat of nuclear terrorism call for new initiatives?

These are the some of the questions addressed in this episode of World Chronicle with the President of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, Sérgio de Queiroz Duarte.

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ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an unedited interview programme on global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

WILLIAMS: Hello, I'm Mary Alice Williams. How do you prevent the spread of nuclear weapons – and of the technology to build them? How do you promote co-operation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, while – simultaneously – working toward nuclear disarmament? These are the basic questions raised by the NPT – the landmark international treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty, which dates back to 1970, gets reviewed every 5 years -- and this year, some observers say, it will face some of its toughest tests ever. We'll be talking about that today with the President of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, Ambassador Sérgio de Queiroz Duarte of Brazil. Mr. Ambassador, Welcome to World Chronicle. Since September eleventh, we live in a world where it seems a clear and present danger, the possibility of a nuclear attack by terrorists who operate outside any system of government. Can the NPT treaty review address this concern?

DUARTE: I think it can but marginally because the NPT really is not directed towards this kind of problem. In the UN of course, there are other mechanisms that have been put together recently to deal with the phenomenon of world terrorism, like resolution 1540, like the convention that was just adopted a couple of weeks ago on nuclear terrorism and things of that sort. And also, some initiatives by groups of nations to try to minimize the.... So, the NPT can deal with that in its purview, but not in general as these instruments are suppose to do.

WILLIAMS: So it remains a sword of Damocles hanging over the world. Joining us in the studio for this interview are Erol Avdovic of Deutsche Welle and Alan Capper of ITN, London. Alan.

CAPPER: Mr. Ambassador, are you feeling optimistic about the conference in view of the disappointments really, from the previous conferences? Do you feel that the nation states that are coming - are coming in the real spirit of co-operation and consensus?

DUARTE: Well I feel moderately optimistic... of course I am cognizant of the difficulties that lie in our path, and also member states know of these difficulties. But I trust that all the states that are member of the NPT – of which there are 187 – it's almost the entirety of the world community. Realize that the treaty must be strengthened and that the treaty is a plus and has been acquired by the world community. So I am confident that there will be an effort on the part of all parties to make it possible for the conference to have a successful outcome. But of course it will be difficult.

AVDOVIC: Mr. Ambassador, since the 1970s NPT was promoted as a norm of multilateralism, on the eve of these conference in Europe, review conference in Europe, keeping in mind all of the achievements, what do you expect concretely from these conferences? How can you bridge the differences between various parties in the conferences?

DUARTE: Well the question of the bridging of the differences is for the parties to do it's, not really for the President. I can be a facilitator for that, I can try to steer the conference towards a successful outcome. But it will take of course political will more than anything else. The treaty has been quite successful I would say. If you look at its history - if you remember correctly in the 1960s, I think it was President Kennedy who said that in ten or fifteen years time, there would be 25 or 30 nuclear weapon nations and this of course did not materialize. And then I think in a large measure because of the NPT, so I think that it is possible for the world community to muster its political will to produce useful results in this conference.

WILLIAMS: Nonetheless, there are many more countries in the nuclear club than there were when President Kennedy made that statement. Three nations with nuclear weapons remain outside the treaty: India, Pakistan and Israel. Can the export of nuclear technology from those countries be controlled?

DUARTE: It would depend on those countries, I think they are responsible countries, responsible members of the international community and I think they have a responsibility towards that. Even if you are not a member of the NPT, it is – I think – possible for these countries to watch so that they do not become proliferators in that sense, towards third nations or groups. Of course, proliferation happens in the sense that from the original five now, you have three more you have also North Korea. But we are very far away from President Kennedy's prediction – I guess.

CAPPER: How do you feel about the intervention of the United States in certain issues for example, the belief that Iraq was building or had a nuclear arsenal? And the express concern about what may be happening in Iran, intervention by the United States or any other country. Does that undermine everything that the treaty is setting out to do?

DUARTE: Well the treaty does not deal exactly with that but in the Charter of the United Nations, you have the norm for the conduct of countries, and the Charter tells countries how they should behave in the face of emergency situations of that sort. And I think that's the norm that should be followed by nations when they confront difficulties of that kind.

AVDOVIC: I think the implementation is a key word here. How would you assess the implementation of the treaty so far? Recently for example, as we had the opportunity to hear the former Soviet president, Gorbachov here who said, that some countries are implementing more than they promised to do. Not giving real indictment, for example, of the government of the United States they do not follow the implementation as Russia would do. So how would you assess the implementation?

DUARTE: The treaty has three pillars, generally...considered as such. One is non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, to prevent the acquisition of such weapons by any country outside of the five that the treaty recognizes. The other is nuclear disarmament, and it's the responsibility of the five armed countries to dismantle their arsenals eventually to arrive at disarmament. And the third is the peaceful uses of nuclear energy - the promotion of the peaceful uses. The question is that the provisions that deal with proliferation are much more explicit, there is a system of verification, there is a system by the IAA to monitor compliance, and there's even eventually the possibility of bringing violators to the Security Council for possible sanctions. But on the side of the nuclear disarmament provision, that deals with it in a more general and in a vaguer way. It leaves, more or less for the nuclear countries to say in which way they will implement their obligations and there is of course no verification of that. So the implementation of course, is different on either side of the equation. Finally on the peaceful uses of course, this is also subject to verification by the IAA.

AVDOVIC: Can you put some specific requirements to the weapon state countries and follow-up in that field of implementation?

DUARTE: The treaty does not put any specific requirements. It requires them to seek to achieve in good faith negotiations that will be conducive to nuclear disarmament, in the framework of general and complete disarmament. So it is a very general formulation and this is what they have accepted as their obligation.

WILLIAMS: One of the countries which are causing the world - at least the case of the jitters - is Iran, which has some nuclear capability - we believe - and says it's for peaceful uses. Where's the line? If you're enriching uranium, if you're getting the fuels, if you are producing the fuels necessary to use nuclear energy - both for peaceful means and for weaponry how can even inspectors find the line? And should that be in the treaty?

DUARTE: I don't think there is any international system that makes it possible to assess intentions. Countries that do have nuclear weapons are considered - and I recognize

they are nuclear weapons countries – they have the weapons, maybe they don't have the intentions now on using them, so it's possible. So intentions...

WILLIAMS: So can....

DUARTE: So intentions are very difficult. But Iran is a member of the NPT, it is subject to the system of verification, it has signed the additional protocol which is a further system of verification and so far, the International Atomic Energy Agency has not found Iran to be in violation of the treaty.

WILLIAMS: Gotta make your job more difficult though.

DUARTE: Yes, but these are the facts and I'm not here to judge any country.

CAPPER: Mr. Ambassador, North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT raises the whole issue of whether nation states have any right to withdraw from the NPT. Do you have views on that?

DUARTE: I think that as long as the principle of sovereignty of nations is the norm in international relations, there's no way in which you can prevent any country from withdrawing from any international instrument. The NPT itself, like any other international instrument, has a clause that provides for withdrawal. Now, having withdrawn from the NPT, of course North Korea posed a very significant problem to the community. It's the first time that a country ever has withdrawn, and the fact that a country by joining the NPT in the first place, has taken unto itself not to develop nuclear weapons. The fact that it has withdrawn and has said it is developing the nuclear weapons, of course, poses a very case of grave concern to the whole international community. The conference of course will deal with that situation.

CAPPER: It's a powerful political card to play isn't it...

DUARTE: It is.

CAPPER: For a nation state like that.

DUARTE: Certainly, certainly.

AVDOVIC: Ambassador, in the year 2000 the review conference strongly deplored the test bombing...the test of the nuclear weapon of India and Pakistan. Is there is any issue this year that should be deplored?

DUARTE: I think there will be several issues that countries will deplore. They will deplore...some will say that there has been proliferation in cases of some countries. Some will say that the nuclear weapon countries have not completely fulfilled their commitments. There will be of course complaints about the fact that the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty has not yet come

into force, so there will be plenty of material for deploring things that should have happened, should have materialized and fortunately did not.

AVDOVIC: Would you pick up one as...

DUARTE: I said a few, I think I said a few and I answered your question.

WILLIAMS: In his recent report, entitled "The Larger Freedom" the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said, "...The international framework for dealing with nuclear threats needed to be revitalized, they were in danger of erosion". Do you share his view?

DUARTE: I completely share his view. But I think this conference of the NPT is one occasion, a very important occasion for revitalizing and for trying to stem the erosion. And the erosion is an erosion in my view, is an erosion of confidence. In the instruments of the treaty, the mechanisms of the treaty, to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to promote...

WILLIAMS: So are you saying you don't have to do anything further? You simply have to implement what is already there?

DUARTE: Well there are things that have been proposed further in the case of proliferation, like the additional protocol which is an additional system of additional constraints on non-nuclear weapons countries not to produce nuclear weapons under the verification by the IAA. This is one thing. There are some other mechanisms that have been proposed that the conference will examine. And also in the field of nuclear disarmament, there are things that the nuclear weapon countries could do if they wish to improve their record of disarming themselves of nuclear disarmament.

WILLIAMS: This is World Chronicle and we're talking about how to fight the spread of nuclear weapons with Sérgio du Queiroz Duarte, Ambassador Duarte heads the review process on the NPT, the landmark international treaty dealing with this issue. Let's take a look at this clip from the UN Archives.

VIDEO BEGINS:

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER: Atomic bombs today are more than twenty-five times as powerful as the weapons with which the atomic age dawns, while hydrogen weapons are in the range of million of tons of TNT equivalent. Today, the United States stockpile of atomic weapons which of course, increases daily, exceeds by many times the total equivalent of the total of all bombs and all shells that came from every plane and every gun in every theatre of war in all of the years of World War II.

VIDEO ENDS:

WILLIAMS: That of course – President of the United States, Dwight David Eisenhower in 1953 speaking before the United Nations General Assembly. That speech started this whole

movement towards guarding nuclear technology and regulating it. What's the major difference other than additional countries, between the situation in 1953 and the situation now?

DUARTE: Well now you have the NPT, now you have the IAA, now you have commitments by the international community regarding those issues. Now you have a movement of public opinion against nuclear arsenals and nuclear weapons. So there is, I think, a lot of difference between 1953 and now.

CAPPER: You gave a speech in Geneva fairly recently where you said a lot of member states were questioning the whole viability of the NPT but you surprisingly, you used the word crisis. Are we actually in a crisis?

DUARTE: The word crisis was not used by me I made a play of words if I remember that speech on that word crisis, but I think there is a crisis of confidence on the NPT. I think that many states parties feel that the treaty has not been able to fulfill its promise to fulfill what it was meant to do. Both in non-proliferation and in nuclear disarmament; and that's why I think the Secretary-General is perfectly right when he says that we need re-vitalization of the NPT.

CAPPER: Yes, and they were very ambitious expectations that were raised of course – originally with that.

DUARTE: We have to have ambitious expectations if we want to do something that we need.

CAPPER: Right.

AVDOVIC: Ambassador, when you see from that prospective, what would you actually expect? I'm asking you as an expert not only as a chairman or presiding person of the conference. Who would you like to see to move things forward? Who should make that advance step forward just to get out from the crisis? Because there are definitely people who think that the treaty and the review conference itself is in crisis.

DUARTE: I think all parties must do that. Specifically, those that are more significant among the parties.

AVDOVIC: For example?

DUARTE: The five nuclear weapon countries recognize as such those countries that have significant civilian industries, atomic industries, and the international community as a whole. I don't think that we can pinpoint or singularize particular nations. Of course, the ones that are more armed, the countries that have the largest arsenals, the countries that have more predominance in world affairs, of course they do have special responsibilities and I'm sure they will exercise their responsibilities.

AVDOVIC: But what kind of incentives you should go with to outreach them more, those countries that you just mentioned?

DUARTE: The incentives I think is to understand that a world that is regulated by the will of the parties to that instrument, which are almost all nations in the world, is preferable to a world which is regulated by the whims and the will of specific nations of specific parties. I think that is the incentive, a world that is more orderly and is more democratic in that sense – that everyone has participated in the construction of that world.

WILLIAMS: But you do have rogue nations. Libya comes to mind. Last year the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that Libya has pursued a clandestine programme of uranium conversion and enrichment. How concerned should the world be about the likelihood of other states having hidden programmes like this - hidden from view of the international community?

DUARTE: I think the world should be concerned, I think the world is concerned. One of the ways in which you can prevent or at least help prevent things like what happened in Libya from happening again, is to strengthen the system of verification under the IAA. Libya was not a party to the NPT, it only confirmed to what is known as the traditional system of safeguards, and not the systems of safeguards that are being proposed now that are more intrusive and more capable of discovering whether there are prohibited activities. But again, you can not be one hundred percent sure of anything in this world – can you?

CAPPER: The United States has reneged on pledges to negotiate for a comprehensive test ban treaty. What is to stop other member nations taking such strong independent lines and undermining the whole basis of the treaty?

DUARTE: First let me – to be fair, what the US did was not to ratify the instrument, the US previous administration did sign that instrument - it was the legislative branch at the senate that did not ratify. So you cannot really say I think in all fairness that the US did renege on anything. It simply did not take the final step to make that treaty binding on the United States. And most of the other nations in the world are a party to that instrument, there are 120 parties that have already ratified – including three nuclear weapon states, Britain, France and Russia. And China is still waiting on the sidelines just as the US is. So I think we should set the record straight.

CAPPER: Although it does mean in reality the US is not a signatory.

DUARTE: It is a signatory but not a ratifier.

CAPPER: Right.

DUARTE: The administration did sign the treaty. Now the US has also observed, like the other four nuclear powers, the US has also observed the moratorium on tests – of course it is a voluntary moratorium. But it is a very significant step that since I think 1992, no tests has been carried out by the United States, or by any of the other four nuclear weapon countries that are a party to the NPT. So this is significant this is important. Now this does not mean that the international community continues to prod both the US and China to become ratifiers because it is one of the requirements of the treaty, is that a number of states have to ratify and specifically, named by name in the treaty, so the treaty can enter into force regardless of how many have signed or ratified. There are still eleven states that have not ratified the treaty, among those the US and China, so it is something important but I think we should put things in the proper perspective.

AVDOVIC: Just specifically in regard of that, there are 44 states necessary for those treaty to be ratified, and only 33 ratified it. Why is the ratification process delayed from your point of view, or taking into account or the expert reports or so?

DUARTE: Well it would be difficult for me to specify for each country what the reasons are. I think that at least in the more significant countries among those eleven that have not ratified yet, the reason of course is concerns about national security. Countries have predicated their security on their military might...in other cases of course – of non ratifiers among those eleven, there may be other difficulties. I know that at least one country has a constitutional difficulty about that, which is kind of a catch 22 thing that has nothing to do with security or anything else. But it's a problem of its non constitutional process; for instance, one of those eleven. So there are a variety of reasons basically for those that really are in the forefront, the reasons have to do with their perceptions of security.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Ambassador, I would like to return to the subject of nuclear terrorism. It's a likelihood – I think the whole world probably acknowledges that that's a likelihood - as long as there are processes to enrich uranium. Is there any way the United Nations or any nation can stop this threat?

DUARTE: Again, I don't know if you can stop that threat completely, absolutely, because there will always be ways...

WILLIAMS: Without just shutting down every nuclear energy plant in the world, right?

DUARTE: You can always have a clandestine nuclear energy plant somewhere. I mean the absolute guarantee I think it is very hard. It's like having any absolute guarantee against crime or theft or things of that sort. There will always be someone plotting some way of circumventing the law. But the more stringent you make the international system, of course,

the less likely it is for these things to happen and I think the UN is working on that as I said in the beginning. There's already a series of instruments that are being put into place and hopefully, those will at least...at least, minimize the threat to a reasonable level. But again, human beings are what they are.

CAPPER: Just picking up on that question, the breakdown of the former Soviet Union and the creation of the new Soviet Republics. Russian Republics have created a great deal of uncertainty about how those weapons, those arsenals are controlled and do we know enough about that? Because in a sense...that has created proliferation all by itself.

DUARTE: Well I know that the US and Russia have been cooperating very closely on trying to keep that arsenal under control and not only the arsenal itself, or the things of that type, but also the minds of the people who devised those things, I'm not an expert on that. I don't think I can make any authoritative statement on this but one thing that I heard from experts is that it is not only experts or scientists from the former Soviet Union but also from other countries in this world that might be tapped for money to do things for illicit purposes. So, I think we should be concerned not only with the former Soviet Union but with the rest of the international scientific community.

WILLIAMS: Thank you very much Mr. Ambassador for being with us on World Chronicle. Our guest has been the Sérgio de Queiroz Duarte, President of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. He was interviewed by Erol Avdovic of Deutsche Wella and Alan Capper of ITN, London. I'm Mary Alice Williams thank you for joining us we invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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