THE NPT, NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, AND TERRORISM

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Before I begin, I would like to say just a few words to express my gratitude to the hosts of this event.

The Institute for Energy and Environmental Research is a non-governmental organization dedicated to wisely-chosen synergistic pursuits undertaken with admirable scientific rigour. It has for many years examined many key problems relating to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the dangers inherent in both the licit and illicit applications of weapons-usable nuclear materials. It has given the environment the attention it rightfully deserves in considerations of energy policy. It has underscored that the fate of Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) depends upon the fulfillment of all of its commitments by all of its parties, most especially the key commitments dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation. Lastly, it has wisely focused much of its efforts on public education, while issuing publications that are useful to the experts as well.

My own remarks will focus somewhat more narrowly upon the NPT, nuclear disarmament,
and terrorism - while each is in its own right quite timely, all three considered together make an even more appropriate subject. We are, after all, at the start of the first session of the Preparatory Committee to the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the first such session since the nuclear-weapon states made their "unequivocal commitment" to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, a commitment reinforcing their earlier commitment under Article VI of the treaty to this vital end. And amid new daily horrors from the Middle East, it is timely to recall that the future of the NPT will in many ways depend upon the fate of the Middle East resolution agreed at the last NPT Review Conference, in particular with respect to efforts to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in that troubled region.

We are also on the eve of a major summit between the leaders of the United States and the Russian Federation, an event that may lead to an agreement on significant cuts in their deployed strategic nuclear weapons. And of course, we find ourselves at a time -- only months after the tragic events of 11 September 2001 -- when increasingly numbers of governments, international organizations, NGOs, and individual citizens are recognizing the potential implications of nuclear terrorism for international peace and security and for our common global environment.

As other speakers have already addressed in some detail issues relating to NPT compliance, the role of treaties both generally and specifically in support of non-proliferation and disarmament goals, and several technical issues, I would like to keep my focus on this theme of synergism. In particular, I would like to discuss briefly some of the linkages I see between nuclear disarmament and counter-terrorism efforts. What do these activities share in common and what can these similarities -- and differences -- tell us that could help to improve the chances for success of each of these endeavours?

Global Problems Require Multilateral Solutions

Both issues are, first of all, global problems demanding solutions that will require extensive multilateral cooperation. While numerous forms of gross political violence are largely confined to existing national borders, terrorism involving the actual or potential use of weapons of mass destruction is another matter entirely. Because of the trans-national effects of the use of such weapons, their indiscriminate effects on military and civilian targets alike, and the worldwide market for the technologies and materials that terrorists can use to make such weapons -- this type of terrorism requires responses both within and among nation states. It also requires responses that require a great deal of public understanding and support.

At the United Nations, we have many efforts underway that bear directly on this subject. Late last year, Security Council resolution 1373 established a special committee on counter-terrorism. This resolution identified a number of specific actions for all states to take to alleviate the global terrorist threat. For those of you who are interested in further details about this committee, I encourage you to consult the UN's new web site devoted to the mandate and activities of this committee.
The General Assembly, meanwhile, adopted resolution 56/24 T, which called upon all Member States to renew and fulfill their individual and collective commitments to multilateral cooperation in the fields of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This progress, the resolution emphasized, is in order to contribute to global efforts against terrorism. This was a synergistic resolution, par excellence.

The Secretariat is also very much involved in exploring possible future contributions of the United Nations to the global counter-terrorist effort. The Secretary-General has established a Policy Working Group on the UN and Terrorism with several subgroups to look into the many facets of this threat. I am currently chairing the one dealing with WMD terrorism. We have already completed a preliminary report on this subject and while I will not provide a detailed summary, I would like to confirm that the Secretariat takes this threat very seriously -- while recognizing the many obstacles that terrorists face in acquiring weapons of mass destruction and in using them to produce large-scale civilian casualties. Our report gives particular attention to the problem of strengthening the physical security and safeguards over the special materials that can be used as nuclear or radiological weapons. We also point to the possibility -- however remote it may now seem in many instances -- that terrorists might someday acquire new types of weapons of mass destruction.

The events of 11 September also encouraged the International Atomic Energy Agency to focus greater attention on the need to strengthen physical security over nuclear materials. Last month, its Board of Governors approved in principle a plan of action to upgrade such controls worldwide with a view to preventing additional opportunities for nuclear terrorism. The Board recognized that national measures to protect nuclear material and facilities are uneven and is seeking additional funds to help countries to finance the necessary security improvements. On 17 June, an IAEA Experts Group will meet and, if all goes well, will finalize a draft amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials, which could become the focus of a major conference later this year.

In the field of counter-terrorism, there are already twelve United Nations conventions dealing with this issue and work is continuing on a new convention on the suppression of nuclear terrorism. One can hope that the events of 11 September will inspire more and more states to join these treaties and to redouble their efforts to conclude a new treaty against nuclear terrorism -- all initiatives that would benefit from advocacy efforts by groups in civil society. While the United Nations can encourage its member states to move in these directions, the choices are of course for the states themselves to make.

The UN's experience in assisting the States parties to the NPT during the Preparatory Committee sessions and Review Conferences has shown, however, some subtle ways that the UN can at times exert a positive independent influence. Because the NPT -- unlike the Chemical Weapons Convention -- lacks an institutional infrastructure, the United Nations has assisted the NPT States parties in innumerable ways. While we cannot fully substitute for such a permanent infrastructure, we assist both the States parties and groups in civil society throughout the
laborious work of the review process.

By maintaining all the official records of these deliberations, by offering our advice and counsel to States parties, by helping to encourage public participation while promoting public education, and by offering a common global forum for debate and deliberation -- the United Nations is making its own contributions in the global effort to reduce nuclear threats. Yet the primary responsibility for action still remains in the hands of the States parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon states, and this is likely to remain the case until a global nuclear disarmament regime can develop a stronger legal and institutional infrastructure -- including, that is, a nuclear weapons convention and some machinery to ensure that it is implemented.

The "thirteen steps" agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference were a very constructive step forward in addressing this problem -- by establishing some specific benchmarks for assessing progress in nuclear disarmament. Clearly full implementation of each of these steps would advance substantially global efforts against nuclear terrorism -- by making nuclear materials harder to acquire, by further de-legitimizing the possession of nuclear weapons per se by any country or anybody, and by demonstrating to concerned citizens around the world that close multilateral cooperation in disarmament and non-proliferation can produce peace and security dividends -- not to mention cost savings -- that cannot be purchased by greater reliance upon arms alone or the threat or use of force.

This is, in essence, what a good treaty review process is supposed to do: to build confidence, to alleviate perceptions of security threats, and to underscore the positive gains from forging and implementing multilateral commitments.

Getting at Those Elusive "Deeper Roots"

I just returned last week from a trip to China, where I opened an international conference on "A Disarmament Agenda for the 21st Century," jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Disarmament Affairs and the Chinese Foreign Ministry. A common theme of many participants at this conference was that we need to get to the "deeper roots" of conflicts that generate the pressure to acquire deadly arms.

This is most apparent in the case of the problem of curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as the demand for such weaponry is driven by complex political, social, and at times economic motivations. Yet the problems of disarmament, non-proliferation, and WMD terrorism also require an intensive examination of root causes. Disarmament is most sustainable when it is embraced by states as being demonstrably in their national security interests. Similarly, the world community cannot hope to succeed in reducing global proliferation and terrorist threats without addressing the deeper causes that lead states or subnational groups to seek weapons of mass destruction -- or that motivate the nuclear have's to work so hard to retain their nuclear options.
One caution is in order, however, in this never-ending pursuit of the ultimate first causes of chronic global problems like the continued existence of nuclear weapons and their risk of proliferation. The problem is that the very existence of these weapons surely forms one of the deepest tap roots of the problem -- for stockpiles beget stockpiles. Nuclear weapons, in short, are not simply reflections of underlying conflicts that, once solved, would cause such weapons to disappear. Among the current P-5 states -- the NPT's nuclear-weapon states -- there is currently a very low likelihood of general war; yet the nuclear arsenals persist, and persist in all cases based on claims of security threats from the nuclear weapons of other countries. When all the many roots of nuclear armament and proliferation are finally unearthed and sorted out for systematic analysis -- the bomb itself remains.

Conclusion

I have now come full circle back to by original point of departure: a note of recognition for the absolutely indispensable role played by non-governmental groups in promoting sensible responses to the nuclear dangers amongst us all. They keep governments focused on earnest efforts to achieve solemn disarmament and nonproliferation commitments. They help to sort through and identify the deeper roots of the problem. And they provide a foundation upon which to build support for multilateral cooperation, and to sustain and deepen that cooperation over time.

Acting alone, the nation state cannot solve these problems without cooperation from the people and among all countries in common international arenas, at the subregional, regional, and global levels. Our instruments to address this challenge, in short, have not evolved as rapidly as the threat has evolved -- we are confronting 21st century global problems with institutional tools of times past, perhaps even centuries past. While I am sure this conference will not conclusively resolve this paradox, I am more confident that its organizers and participants will come away with a deeper appreciation of the work ahead.

The challenge of coming to grips with the many military, political, economic, and environmental threats that nuclear weapons pose to humanity will require a level of international cooperation on a scale far beyond what we have witnessed so far. I have identified only a few new approaches that are under consideration, largely within the United Nations. Further progress will require a new synergy of effort, involving an increasingly diverse coalition of groups and interests across the globe, a coalition linked by a common goal of freeing the world from the most dangerous weapon human ingenuity has produced.

For these reasons, I extend my best wishes both to the organizers of this conference and to all its participants, in the hope that they might succeed in all their important work.