

17 November 2014

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa,
President of the 69th Session of the General Assembly,
at the 2014 IPS International Achievement Award for Nuclear
Disarmament**

Excellencies,

Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General,

Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala,

**Dr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation,
Distinguished Guests and Members of the Press,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to join you this evening to honour Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, former Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, and recognize his invaluable contributions towards nuclear disarmament. I would like to thank our host, Inter-Press-Service for bringing us together on this occasion, as well as Soka Gakkai International, the sponsor of this award.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, Mr. Dhanapala, for this well-deserved Achievement Award for Nuclear Disarmament.

A man of peace, you have dedicated most of your career to promoting disarmament and arms control. You presided skilfully over the 1995 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference, a landmark event in disarmament history. You were at the helm of the Department of Disarmament Affairs of the UN Secretariat from 1998 to 2003, spearheading UN efforts to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to reinforce arms control norms. Your hard work and dedication have contributed to building a safer and more peaceful world.

At the beginning of the 69th session of the General Assembly, we celebrated the inaugural International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The Assembly proclaimed this day to raise awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons and to mobilize international efforts towards achieving our collective goal of a nuclear-weapon free world.

In this regard, I cannot overstate the essential role of civil society, including non-governmental organisations, press, and academia. The work of organisations such as Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs – which Mr. Dhanapala presides over; Inter-Press Service, our host this evening; or Soka Gakkai International, the sponsor of this Award, contributes to raising awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons and to advocating for their total elimination.

The issue of nuclear disarmament has long been prominent on the agenda of United Nations since the adoption of its very first resolution in 1946. The General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions,

reflecting our collective aspiration for a world free of nuclear weapons. Last year, the Assembly held its first high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, almost seven decades later, the threat posed by nuclear weapons to our common humanity remains.

Distinguished guests,

We know all too well that the stakes are incredibly high. Should nuclear weapons ever be used again, the humanitarian and environmental consequences would be of such magnitude that they could threaten the very survival of humankind. In addition, one cannot overlook the real danger of nuclear arms falling into the hands of non-state actors and terrorist organisations.

In the face of such grave risks, the status quo is not an option that can be sustained. In this regard, the 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference will present an opportunity to further strengthen the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The elimination of nuclear weapons is not only a matter of peace and security. It also has socio-economic ramifications. We live in a world where nearly a billion people living in extreme poverty struggle every day to make ends meet. Can we really afford to maintain extensive nuclear arsenals that could destroy humankind in the blink of an eye? In September next year, world leaders will gather here in New York to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including Sustainable Development Goals that will succeed the Millennium Development Goals. We look forward to a new era of sustainable development, in which both people and the environment can thrive and prosper.

But let us make no mistake. If we are to turn this vision into a lasting reality for the present and future generations, we must once and for all free our world from the dreadful threat of nuclear weapons.

I thank you for your attention.