

Middle Powers Initiative Article VI Forum

Opening Statement

By Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C., MPI Chairman

October 3, 2005

The Middle Powers Initiative welcomes all participating States to this first meeting of the Article VI Forum.

I do not propose to spend any time in this Introduction reviewing the nature of the present crisis in the Non-Proliferation regime, and particularly the centre-piece, the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The failure of the NPT Review Conference in May, 2005 and the deletion of the subject of disarmament and non-proliferation from the U.N. 60th Anniversary Summit Declaration are fresh in our minds.

Rather, MPI wishes to emphasize at the outset what can be accomplished despite the constraints of the present agonizing environment. We believe that when like-minded States work together, much can be achieved. Two recent successful conferences in the field of nuclear disarmament illustrate my point.

-- In April, 110 countries attended an International Conference of the States Parties to the Nuclear Weapons-Free Zones Treaties, and unanimously adopted

a strong declaration calling for more NWFZs as an effective means to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

-- Two weeks ago, September 21-23, 2005, 90 States Parties attended the Fourth Conference on Entry-into-Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and unanimously agreed to step up their work to achieve the remaining requisite ratifications of the CTBT.

Both conferences advanced the nuclear disarmament agenda. This progress was made possible because the participating States wanted progress. True, it would be better if all States worked together to forward a common agenda. But that is not the way the world is working at the present time.

So the Middle Powers Initiative has concluded that we ought to get on with what is possible to achieve today. That has led us to suggest the Article VI process: a working group of important non-nuclear States determined to save the NPT. Instead of accepting the roadblock thrown up by the nuclear weapons States, a group of like-minded States could now start work to identify the legal, political and technical requirements for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

This work should start at first among like-minded non-nuclear weapons States working in a non-combative atmosphere. The work could

stimulate the deliberating and negotiating processes and thus revitalize the disarmament fora. The Article VI Forum could then follow, in subsequent meetings, a dual track consisting of informational and preparatory work for the development and implementation of the legal, political and technical elements, and the exploration of ways to start negotiations on disarmament steps leading to a Nuclear Weapons Convention or a framework of instruments for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

I hasten to add that the Article VI Forum is not an exclusive group. It is open-ended. When participants feel the time is right to invite the nuclear weapons States to these deliberations, such invitations will be extended.

Meanwhile, the MPI will be pleased to receive your suggestions about how an advisory body of core States might be constructed to advance the Article VI Forum. MPI hopes that you will express interest in pursuing this work at a two-day meeting, in March, 2006 at the Clingendael Institute, The Hague, where experts could be invited to help lead deliberations.