



RESPONDING TO THE NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT CRISIS

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This Chairman's Statement is presented to open the dialogue at the Middle Powers Initiative International Steering Committee meeting April 26 in Geneva.

A. Non-Proliferation Regime Undermined

The prospects for nuclear disarmament that were seen when the Middle Powers Initiative began in 1998 have changed dramatically for the worse.

The pledges made when the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was indefinitely extended in 1995 have been abandoned. The 1996 ruling of the International Court of Justice that states have an obligation to conclude negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons has been ignored. The "unequivocal undertaking" toward total elimination, given in 2000, has been pushed aside. Each day, the warning of the Canberra Commission rings more true: "The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to others to acquire them."

Jayantha Dhanapala, U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, calls the gulf between declaration and deeds in nuclear disarmament "alarming." Instead of genuine progress, the world has seen the abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the development of improved nuclear weapons, the prospect of more nuclear tests, and plans for the use of nuclear weapons even against non-nuclear weapon states.

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During 2001, the Bush Administration conducted a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which made clear that its nuclear weapons stockpile remains a cornerstone of U.S. national security policy. The NPR establishes expansive plans to revitalize U.S. nuclear forces, and all the elements that support them, within a New Triad of capabilities that combine nuclear and conventional offensive strikes with missile defences and nuclear-weapons infrastructure.

Until recently, there had been a universal consensus that the proliferation of nuclear weapons posed a paramount threat to the security of the world. The U.S. shared this belief. President Bush has changed this presumption; he said in his 2003 State of the Union address, "The gravest danger facing America and the world is outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical and biological weapons." Thus, the emphasis has shifted from the weapons themselves proliferating to the regimes in which they might appear. The policies that arise from this shift are dramatic. The focus has shifted from control and elimination of the weapons to regime changes. This is very hazardous to international order. Its consequences were seen in the war in Iraq.

This shift has exposed the internal contradictions, which now exist in U.S. policies on nuclear weapons. On the one hand, the December 2002 National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction states:

“We must ensure compliance with relevant international agreements, including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)... Existing nonproliferation and arms control regimes play an important role in our overall strategy. The United States will support those regimes that are currently in force, and work to improve the effectiveness of, and compliance with, those regimes. ... Overall, we seek to cultivate an international environment that is more conducive to nonproliferation. Our efforts will include...Strengthening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)...”

This fits with the policy enunciated in the September 2002 National Security Strategy, which states:

“We are also guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations. The United States is committed to lasting institutions like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Organization of American States and NATO as well as other long-standing alliances.”

On the other hand, it is not possible to reconcile the above commitments with the position taken in the Nuclear Posture Review, which states:

“Nuclear weapons play a critical role in the defense capabilities of the United States, its allies and friends. They provide credible military options to deter a wide range of threats including WMD and large scale conventional military force.” [p. 7]

“The need is clear for a revitalized nuclear weapons complex that will... be able ... to design, develop, manufacture, and certify new warheads in response to new national requirements; and maintain readiness to resume underground nuclear testing if required.” [p. 30]

When the Nuclear Posture Review is seen in the context of President Bush’s National Security Strategy, an alarming prospect of the use of nuclear weapons comes into view. The new Strategy says that the U.S. will take anticipatory action to defend itself, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. The Strategy states: “To forestall or prevent ... hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.” The Strategy was used to start the 2003 war against Iraq. Immense consequences will follow this war that will affect geostrategic relations for years to come.

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The present situation has changed the parameters of the dialogue and negotiations for nuclear disarmament. The entire nonproliferation regime, so laboriously constructed over the

past three decades, is challenged. The NPT may not survive. Arms control treaties may become meaningless. The United Nations itself is brushed aside. The rule of law, on which every political policy is supposed to be built, is undermined.

The steady, albeit slow, progress in the building of peaceful relations based on the rule of law, has been halted, if not stopped. Chaos has become the dominant characteristic of the first years of the 21st century.

At the same time, however, global interest on how best to deal with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has increased exponentially as a result of the Iraq war. The firm rejection by most of the European governments, and also Canada, of the preemptive doctrine and the massive public demonstrations indicate that there is an opportunity to advance multilateral disarmament initiatives despite the U.S. and U.K. approach.

What, then, should MPI do in this new environment? Is our original rationale still valid? Must we change our strategy?

B. MPI Action Needed More Than Ever

The fundamental purpose of the MPI is to encourage middle power states to use their access to the nuclear weapons states to press them to fulfil their legal obligations to nuclear disarmament and, specifically, to the NPT. That mission has not changed, and is needed more than ever.

Since the United States has become a chief impediment to nuclear disarmament, MPI must help middle power governments speak directly to the internal contradictions of U.S. nuclear weapons policy. These nations cannot tolerate the U.S. promoting and rejecting the NPT at the same time.

MPI, by itself, does not have access to the U.S. government. But the Global Security Institute, of which MPI has become a program, does. GSI's access has been enhanced by its Bipartisan Security Group, designed to educate and build relationships with Members of Congress and their staffs. Although it was an exigency that brought MPI and GSI into an integral relationship, as events have unfolded, it has turned out to be a fortuitous blending. Both MPI and GSI are strengthened as we press middle power states to act in the face of the present danger, and communicate that concern directly to Washington. Therefore, MPI and GSI should intensify our work – MPI by going forward with more contact with middle power states, and GSI with spreading knowledge in Washington of middle power concerns as conveyed by MPI. The rationale for our work is stronger than ever.

C. A Central Message

In responding to the present nuclear disarmament crisis exacerbated by the threat of terrorism, MPI should consider concentrating its policies and briefs on these – too often overlooked – words from the Final Document of the NPT 2000 Review:

“... the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.”

World pressure must be mounted on the nuclear weapons states to implement these words. An obvious place to start is to call for a U.N. Security Council Summit on all Weapons of Mass Destruction, in which the nuclear weapons powers would have to face up to their responsibilities. Since it does not appear that the permanent members of the Security Council (i.e., the declared nuclear weapons states) are disposed to hold such a Summit, then it is logical to advance the longstanding request of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the international community to hold an international conference on nuclear dangers. All states, not just NPT adherents, would be invited. In advancing this proposal (e.g., by encouraging a state to submit a resolution at the U.N.), MPI could help to strengthen both the NPT and the role of the United Nations in nuclear disarmament. It would focus the attention of the world on the overarching fact that the only way to guarantee safety from a nuclear weapons attack is through elimination backed up by an intensive verification regime. This would be a bold, understandable move. Moreover, such a concerted campaign to rid the world of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction would advance another important objective: strengthening the legal regime that underpins the multilateral system. This concentrated attention on the objective of nuclear disarmament – the elimination of nuclear weapons – would re-focus the attention of the public in an intelligible way.

These priorities for action to strengthen the NPT, arrived at through MPI Strategy Consultations, are still valid in the new environment and should be included in further briefing materials:

1. Strategic arms reductions.
2. Control of missile defenses and non-proliferation of missiles.
3. Tactical arms reductions.
4. Non-use of nuclear weapons.
5. Ban on nuclear testing.
6. Control of fissile materials

D. Two Sets of Countries

MPI must now concentrate its activities on two sets of countries:

- a) **New Agenda Coalition.** MPI has achieved a reputation of professional expertise in bringing forward to the N.A. the results of our Strategy Consultations. We have helped to reinforce N.A. statements and resolutions. The N.A. itself feels stymied in the present situation. Some within the N.A. question whether the U.S. wall is simply too big for them to expend any political capital in mounting. This is a moment for MPI to concentrate on shoring up the N.A., to ensure that their courage does not falter. We must help them to raise their own profile.

b) NATO countries. The MPI Strategic Plan calls for strong attention to be paid the NATO countries, with delegations to selected states. This program was interrupted by the extraordinary situation leading up to the Iraq war. We must resume our attention to NATO and mount high-level delegations concentrating on the nuclear disarmament agenda. MPI achieved considerable success in working closely with Canada (four delegations since 1998), which resulted in Canada being the only NATO state to vote yes for the 2002 N.A. omnibus resolution at the U.N. When MPI asked Canada, with credentials in both camps, to act as a “bridge” between NATO and the N.A., Canada said it could not do this alone. It must have “company” in the NATO states; otherwise its political singularity cannot be sustained.

It is urgent for MPI to send delegations to selected NATO states before the voting on the N.A. resolutions at the 2003 sessions of the U.N. First Committee. Germany, Norway, Denmark, The Netherlands and Spain should be given priority. We must try to help the N.A. get more yes votes from NATO countries in 2003.

E. Strengthen PNND Network

In carrying out the above program, MPI/GSI must ensure that the Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament (PNND) is expanded. The growth of this network, in a short period of time, has been remarkable. The PNND International Conference, planned for September, 2003 in Vancouver, will put a new spotlight on PNND activities. Increasing numbers of parliamentarians around the world are deeply concerned about the geostrategic turn of events. We must help them to energize their governments in a more determined manner. Every effort must be made to increase the resources for this work.

F. Conclusion

MPI’s renewed Strategic Plan must focus intensely on the New Agenda Coalition and the NATO states with a powerful message at this moment of world danger. The message is: The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Delegations and strategy consultations have proven their value in getting the MPI message into governments and must be continued. We must energize the parliamentary systems in projecting this message.

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