

Opening Comments Vienna Roundtable, May 1, 2012

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

I wish to welcome everyone to the Vienna roundtable, “Building the Framework for a Nuclear Weapons Free world: Laying Out the Map,” organized by the Middle Powers Initiative with the support of the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs. We also appreciate the continuing support of the German Federal Foreign Office.

The meeting takes as its basis the statement in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty: it “affirms that all states need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.”

What is that framework? How can we characterize it? How can States begin to build it? These are the questions MPI proposes to address in a series of meetings to be known as the Framework Forum.

The Middle Powers Initiative, a consortium of eight international organizations specializing in nuclear disarmament issues, has considerable experience in convening states to work together for nuclear disarmament. Over several years, MPI convened six meetings (New York, the Hague, Ottawa, Vienna, Dublin and Geneva) of the Article VI Forum, attended by the representatives of a total of 30 States.

The Article VI Forum identified nine priorities, which led to MPI recommendations to the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty on these subjects:

- preparatory work for negotiations on a convention or

framework of instruments;

- transparency through a UN-based, comprehensive accounting system covering size of nuclear arsenals, and spending on nuclear forces;
- negotiation of a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty;
- bringing a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force;
- phasing out the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines;
- verified reduction of nuclear forces;
- Middle East: hold a UN-sponsored conference on a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;
- regulation of nuclear fuel production and supply, and support for meeting energy needs through safe, renewable energy sources;
- improved NPT governance.

These steps, even if implemented, are themselves not sufficient to achieve a nuclear weapons free world. They need to be linked into a framework to provide a comprehensive approach to achieving a nuclear weapons free world. Incrementalism is not leading the world to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Further, modernization programs set back the prospects of nuclear disarmament.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has tried to lead the way to a nuclear weapons free world. But many major States are tepid in following, seeming fearful of the bold action required to actually free the world of nuclear weapons. Hoping that small steps will suffice in warding off nuclear disaster, they are resisting the call of history to finally put an end to the weapons.

Both the opportunity and the crisis point to an inescapable fact of life in the 21st century: a two-class world in which the powerful aggrandize unto themselves nuclear weapons while proscribing their acquisition by other states is not sustainable. We face the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons because the powerful nuclear states have not used their authority to build a world law outlawing all nuclear weapons.

A framework approach would address the doctrine that underlies the ongoing retention of nuclear weapons.

Of course, MPI can only proceed with the Framework Forum if governments wish us to do so and if there is sufficient resources. Those are two big “ifs.” But on the basis of my world tour last year speaking to many governments, I am confident there is a general desire to start constructive activity to move the nuclear disarmament agenda forward.

Thus the objective of the Framework Forum could be to provide an ongoing, informal setting where the legal, technical, political, and institutional requisites for a nuclear weapons free world can be identified and developed to build political momentum towards the commencement of formal negotiations for a legal ban on nuclear weapons.

The Briefing Paper, “Building the Framework for a Nuclear Weapons Free World: Laying Out the Map,” prepared by MPI, sets out the beginning of this process and I commend it to you.

We are grateful that Ambassador Libran Cabactulan, whose distinguished leadership made the 2010 NPT Review Conference a success, is here to give a keynote address, and it is my pleasure now to introduce him.