

*Article VI Forum*

**Forging a New Consensus for the NPT:  
Establishing a Like-Minded Agenda**

**Opening Statement**

**By Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.  
Chairman, Middle Powers Initiative**

**Vienna, March 29, 2007**

The Middle Powers Initiative is honoured to convene this fourth meeting of the Article VI Forum. We warmly welcome representatives of states and express our appreciation to the Government of Austria and the International Atomic Energy Agency for their support. We are grateful for the many courtesies extended by the Vienna International Centre. MPI is also deeply honoured to have Hon. Jayantha Dhanapala, former U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, and former Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers of the Netherlands as featured speakers today.

Previous meetings of the Article VI Forum were held at the United Nations, New York, The Hague and Ottawa. At these meetings, the Forum has opened up a practical discussion on the legal, political and technical requirements for a nuclear weapons-free world. Already MPI has identified and examined five priority measures:

- Full ratification and entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
- Immediate negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.
- Standing down (de-alerting) of U.S. and Russian nuclear forces and elimination of the launch-on-warning option from nuclear war plans.
- Legal assurances of non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states.

- Strengthening systems for the verified and irreversible reduction and elimination of nuclear arsenals, notably U.S. and Russian arsenals.

It is the considered view of the Middle Powers Initiative that definable progress must be made on at least these measures if the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is not to fail. That is perhaps a negative way of expressing our aspirations. Actually, we want the 2010 Review to succeed with not only a ringing endorsement of the Treaty but a consensus on implementation of practical steps. But measuring “success” is a difficult process; the MPI understands all too well the length of time it will take to achieve the goal of the NPT: a world rid of nuclear weapons.

Surely, if states have learned anything from the combative conduct that marked the 2005 NPT Review Conference, they must recognize that genuine cooperation by all is required to move the nuclear disarmament process forward in meaningful ways.

The Article VI Forum, operating in a non-combative atmosphere, has shown a common determination to move towards full implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Our meetings have overcome the cynicism that too often characterizes disarmament discussions. We have, in fact, uncovered reasons for optimism.

In 2006, all but four states in the U.N. General Assembly voted in favour of a Japanese-sponsored resolution, “Renewed Determination Towards the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons,” which called on states to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, negotiate a ban on the production of fissile materials, diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies, reduce the operational status of nuclear forces, and take other practical steps.

MPI has also noted the remarkable op-ed article published in the *Wall Street Journal* January 4, 2007 by four distinguished American figures – two Republicans and two Democrats – calling for action to reduce nuclear dangers. George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn and William J. Perry, all former officials of great responsibility and experience, warned, “The world is now on the precipice of a new and dangerous nuclear era.” They set out a number of urgent steps to achieve “the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.”

Their article lays the groundwork for a bipartisan process in the U.S. to move all the Nuclear Weapons States forward. MPI is conscious of all those within the Nuclear Weapons States who want a new cooperative approach to bring to life the obligations they hold to implement nuclear disarmament.

In historical terms, the tide is turning against nuclear weapons. The moral, legal and military case against them is better understood than ever before. The intellectual argument – that nuclear weapons are needed for security – is now largely rejected as baseless. Only a small coterie of defenders of nuclear weapons can be found today. We know that this coterie still possess immense political power. But the opponents of nuclear weapons are gathering strength. That itself is a new reason for hope. In the present crisis lie the seeds of opportunity.

The first preparatory meeting for the 2010 Review Conference begins in one month, less than one kilometer away from where we are sitting. Our optimism should extend to the procedural as well as the political.

We should not enter this review process with the mindset that nothing substantive can be done in the first, second, or even third preparatory session. Indeed, substantive proposals should be made, and we look to the middle power states to develop a strategy for a consensus approach to the continued viability of the NPT.

At this meeting of the Article VI Forum, we will be examining several of the proposals made by the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, and we are honoured that Hans Blix will personally contribute to this discussion tomorrow. The steps that non-nuclear states can take in the short

term will be examined. We will also recognize how important it is to move toward implementation of the 1995 Middle East Resolution.

The MPI Briefing Paper details the steps necessary to recover momentum for nuclear disarmament. At the NPT PrepComm, MPI will introduce a paper elaborating our findings from the Article VI process. We very much want that paper to express a hope for nuclear disarmament based on a gathering world consensus.