

Saving the Non-Proliferation Treaty: The Role of Parliamentarians

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I wish to congratulate the Inter-Parliamentary Union for strengthening international cooperation through integrating your work into the United Nations system. The IPU resolution of October 1, 2004, calling on Parliaments to strengthen multilateral regimes for non-proliferation of weapons and for disarmament is enlightened, comprehensive and progressive. I wish I had had such a resolution in my hands when I entered the Parliament of Canada thirty-two years ago, for it would have given me an overview of what to aim for in addressing global security challenges. Of course, these challenges have evolved over the years of my parliamentary career – the ending of the Cold War, a plethora of regional wars, the terrorism of 9/11 – but the principles underlying the quest for security have remained the same. The principles are summed up in the United Nations Charter and related instruments emphasizing the need for multilateral cooperation to implement the rule of law.

This session, “Strengthening International Regimes for Arms Control and Disarmament,” could not be more timely, for we are asked to address the impasse in inter-governmental negotiations and urgent measures to counter the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. This leads us directly to the present crisis of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT),

which will be reviewed at its quinquennial conference in 2005. This is a subject that ought to galvanize the attention of parliamentarians everywhere.

Today there are 34,145 nuclear weapons in existence,¹ 96 percent of them in the hands of the United States and Russia. The United Kingdom, France and China have nuclear stocks in the low hundreds, with lesser numbers held by Israel, India and Pakistan. North Korea claims the ability to make a nuclear bomb and Iran is suspected of trying to convert nuclear fuels to bomb-making ability.

The International Atomic Energy Agency reports that at least 40 countries have the capability to produce nuclear weapons, and criticizes the inadequacy of export control systems of nuclear materials which are unable to prevent the existence of an extensive illicit market for the supply of nuclear items. The disappearance, by theft or otherwise, of nuclear materials from Russia, is well established. The threat of nuclear terrorism is on the mind of every official I know. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director-General of the IAEA, says the margin of security today is “thin and worrisome.” Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts goes further: “If Al Qaeda can obtain or assemble a nuclear weapons, they will certainly use it – on New York or

¹ For nuclear weapons data see, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (www.ceip.org/files/pdf/Policybrief23.pdf) and the Natural Resources Defense Council (www.nrdc.org/nuclear/nudb/datainx.asp).

Washington, or any other major American city. The greatest danger we face in the days and weeks and months ahead is a nuclear 9/11, and we hope and pray that it is not already too late to prevent.”

The international community has awakened to the dangers posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons either to more States or sub-State actors who could be terrorists. Thus, the U.N. Security Council earlier this year adopted Resolution 1540 requiring all States to take measures to prevent non-State actors from acquiring or developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and to prevent the spread of these weapons. The Proliferation Security Initiative of the United States seeks to interdict on the high seas the transfer of sensitive nuclear materials. And the G8 countries have allocated \$20 billion over ten years to eliminate some stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Russia.

These steps are by no means sufficient to ward off looming catastrophes. The fact of the matter is that the proliferation of nuclear weapons cannot be stopped as long as the most powerful nations in the world maintain that nuclear weapons are essential for their own security. How can it be satisfactorily explained to would-be nuclear States that the five permanent members of the Security Council, the U.S., Russia, the

U.K., France, and China, charged with maintaining security in the world, are the very same five declared nuclear powers who tell the rest of the world to abstain while they modernize their own nuclear arsenals? It is the continued possession of nuclear weapons by the powerful that undermines the rule of law and acts as an incentive to those who would like to be powerful too.

I would like to make it clear that, of course, North Korea and Iran and any other such state must be stopped from acquiring nuclear weapons, and that the inspection and verification processes of the IAEA must be stepped up with more funding and personnel. But attempting to stop proliferation as a sort of one-dimensional activity will never work unless meaningful disarmament steps are combined with it.

That was exactly what the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was supposed to do when it came into existence in 1970. At that time, a bargain was made: the non-nuclear nations agreed not to acquire nuclear weapons in return for the nuclear weapons States agreeing to negotiate the elimination of all their nuclear weapons; and the developing nations would share in the transfer of nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. That bargain has never been lived up to by the nuclear weapons States.

In 2000, at the last NPT Review Conference, hopes were raised when the 187 States Parties gave an “unequivocal undertaking” to nuclear disarmament through a program of 13 Practical Steps. Since then, the U.S. has taken an aggressive position repudiating some of the 13 Steps, researching the development of a new nuclear weapon, and claiming that the problem today lies not with the nuclear weapons States but the would-be proliferators. The leading non-nuclear weapons States claim the exact opposite: the proliferation of weapons cannot be stopped while the nuclear weapons States arrogate unto themselves the possession of nuclear weapons and refuse to enter into comprehensive negotiations toward elimination as directed by the International Court of Justice.

The whole international community, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, is concerned about proliferation, but the current attempt by the nuclear weapons States to gloss over the discriminatory aspects of the NPT, which are now becoming permanent, has caused the patience of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement to snap. They see a two-class world of nuclear haves and have-nots becoming a permanent feature of the global landscape. In such chaos, the NPT is eroding and the prospect of multiple nuclear weapons States, a fear that caused nations to produce the NPT in the first place, is looming once more.

A new coalition of States determined to save the NPT in 2005 must now be forged – and this is where parliamentarians have a special role to play.

In 1998, a new grouping of seven middle power States, Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden, called the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), came into existence. It was dedicated to the elimination of nuclear weapons through implementing the legal obligations of the NPT. Since then, NAC has become a formidable rallying point for what might be called the “moderate middle” of the nuclear weapons debate – between the recalcitrant nuclear weapons States on the one hand, and the Non-Aligned Movement calling for the immediate implementation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention on the other.

The New Agenda’s annual resolutions at the U.N. First Committee have been gathering strength. Last year’s resolution, based essentially on implementation of the 13 Practical Steps, was adopted by a vote of 121 in favour, 6 opposed and 38 abstentions. (The six no’s were cast by the U.S., U.K., France, India, Pakistan and Israel.) The abstentions are the most interesting category, for here were found all the non-nuclear States of NATO except one – Canada, which voted for the resolution. Efforts were made by the Middle Powers Initiative www.middlepowers.org and others to

persuade the leading non-nuclear members of NATO to join Canada in supporting the resolution. But the adverse influence of the western nuclear States of NATO was too strong.

This year, recognizing that the moderate middle of the nuclear weapons debate must be strengthened if the NPT is to survive the 2005 Review, the New Agenda has presented a leaner, more attractive resolution in an obvious effort to gain the support of all the NATO non-nuclear States. The resolution, “Towards a Nuclear-Weapons Free World: Accelerating the Implementation of Nuclear Disarmament Commitments,” is substantive but does not go beyond previous commitments. It identifies such priorities as: early entry-into-force of the CTBT; reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons and non-development of new types of nuclear weapons; negotiation of an effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty; establishment of a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament at the Conference on Disarmament; and compliance with the principles of irreversibility and transparency and verification capability.

Introducing their moderate approach in an op-ed article in the *International Herald Tribune* September 21, 2004, the seven foreign ministers of the New Agenda stated bluntly that “the primary tool for controlling nuclear weapons, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, risks

falling apart, with further proliferation as a consequence.” They hammered home the point: “If the nuclear weapons States continue to treat nuclear weapons as a security enhancer, there is a real danger that other States will start pondering they should do the same. Recent developments show that this has already happened.”

My experience, having followed the NPT closely for 20 years and having attended all three preparatory meetings for the 2005 Review, tells me that the only way to stop the erosion of the NPT is for a new burst of energy to be shown by middle-power States – the New Agenda, non-nuclear NATO, the European Union and a few other like-minded States – to shore up and influence the centre position in the nuclear weapons debate.

Speaking up takes courage and leadership. Parliamentarians possess both these attributes. You also have access to the decision-making processes of your governments. I appeal to you to make your voices heard in your parliaments and committee meetings with questions, motions, resolutions and the other tools in your hands before the vote is taken during the first week of November.

Ask your ministers and officials precisely what is in the New Agenda resolution that does not conform to your existing commitment to the NPT? Is your loyalty to your nuclear weapons friends greater than your loyalty to

sparing humanity from a nuclear catastrophe? Will you stand up and be counted with those who are taking moderate, practical steps toward the elimination of all nuclear weapons?

I know what parliamentarians can do when you mobilize your strength. Governments dare not listen to you when you speak clearly and forcefully. The new Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament www.gsstitute.org/pnnd is a network of more than 300 parliamentarians in 43 countries at your disposal with helpful information.

The recent IPU resolution calls on governments to press forward in non-proliferation, disarmament and greater international security. This is an act of leadership which you can now follow up to help save the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2005. Your active support of the New Agenda resolution would be an act of great statesmanship.