



NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT – WHERE TO NOW?

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29th August 2009

1. Introduction.

First I would like to thank you for the invitation to address your annual National Council meeting and pay tribute to you and to the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, to which you are affiliated.

The fact that we have now survived over 60 years of the age of nuclear weapons without descending into nuclear holocaust has been the cause of a lot of analysis and discussion, with reference to the doctrines of deterrence and mutually assured destruction etc. I think one of the factors that should be acknowledged is the role of organisations around the world such as International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War in stubbornly refusing to recognise any legitimate role for nuclear weapons, and in helping ensure that a climate in which the use of nuclear weapons might seem legitimate could not arise.

Your remind me of that expression, 'never doubt that a small group of committed and dedicated people can change the world - it is in fact the only thing that ever has'.

I have been asked to speak about the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties inquiry into nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and the second thing I want to say this afternoon is that I think it is a particularly appropriate time for the Committee to be carrying out this Inquiry, and a particularly appropriate time for us to be discussing the issues of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Committee has been asked by the Prime Minister to inquire into and report on

- The international treaties involving Australia which relate to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament
- How these treaties advance Australia's objectives in this field
- How the treaties might be made more comprehensive and effective

- How inter-parliamentary action can assist in strengthening treaty-based aspects of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and
- How the Committee and the Parliament can contribute to the work of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

Our Inquiry is very timely, because there is a lot happening at the moment on these fronts, some of it good, and some of it quite disturbing.

The first good news- apart from the fact that my Committee is carrying out an Inquiry- is that the Australian Government is heavily involved in the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which is being Co-chaired by former Japanese Foreign Minister Ms Yoriko Kawaguchi, and former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, who has an outstanding international reputation and is doing first class work around the world building the case for action.

That Commission is tasked with reinvigorating the global effort against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and seeking to shape a global consensus to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in the lead up to the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty which will be held in May next year. These Review Conferences are only held every five years, and the last one in 2005 was an absolute flop, so it is essential that next year's Conference makes real progress.

And the really good news is that the speech by United States President Barack Obama in Prague in April this year has injected new life, new vitality, new momentum, into the debate.

This debate has been languishing, going around in circles, going nowhere, for years, maybe decades. The previous US President had no interest in it, and the United States had been undermining and white-anting attempts to make progress.

But significantly, in an article in the Wall Street Journal in January 2008, United States former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Defence Secretary William Perry, and former chairman of the US Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn wrote about the threat from the spread of nuclear weapons.

Now these men have had many years experience at the apex of United States defence and foreign policy and they could under no circumstances be thought of as left-wing peaceniks.

But they said in their article "The accelerating spread of nuclear weapons, nuclear know-how and nuclear material has brought us to a nuclear tipping point...The steps we are taking now to address these threats are not adequate to the danger". They went on to suggest steps the international community could take to lessen the danger:-

-First, requiring all Non-Proliferation Treaty signatories to adopt monitoring provisions designed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, in order to strengthen the means of monitoring compliance with the Treaty

-Secondly, develop an international system to manage the nuclear fuel cycle, and

-Third, bring the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty into force.

And Barack Obama's Prague Speech built on the momentum of that Wall Street Journal article, providing a blueprint for United States leadership on a broad-ranging and ambitious non-proliferation and disarmament agenda.

President Obama described the future of nuclear weapons in the 21st century as fundamental to the security of America and to the peace of the world. He said "Today I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons"- I repeat, a world without nuclear weapons.

He went on to say "to put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and we urge others to do the same...To reduce our warhead stockpiles, we will negotiate a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russians this year...[And I will add that progress was made on this front in July in Moscow in talks between Presidents Obama and Medvedev].

Barack Obama said "To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue US ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty...And to cut off the building blocks needed for a bomb, the United States will seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons...And we should build a framework for civil nuclear co-operation, including an international fuel bank, so that countries can access peaceful power without increasing the risks of proliferation".

Now all of these announcements were, in my view, very good news, and they've breathed new life into places like the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, which had become largely moribund.

But I said earlier that there's also been plenty of bad news on the nuclear front. North Korea has tested rockets that could be used for long range missiles and conducted a nuclear explosion, in flagrant breach of United Nations rules.

Iran has also been engaged in nuclear and ballistic missile activity. It has locked out the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose job it is to make sure countries producing nuclear power to generate electricity are not also trying to produce nuclear weapons.

And terrorists are seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. Al Qaeda has said it seeks a bomb and would be prepared to use it.

This is particularly troubling in relation to Pakistan, which has nuclear weapons and also has active terrorist insurgents. And finally, while the United States is now highly positive about the non-proliferation and disarmament cause, it remains to be seen whether other countries will now also come on board.

The road to nuclear hell is paved with defensive intentions. The United States developed nuclear weapons after it was attacked during the Second World War by Japan, and both the United States and Russia developed nuclear weapons as a defensive strategy during the Cold War.

Because they had nuclear weapons China, which at various times during the nuclear age has had poor relations with both America and Russia, developed nuclear weapons as well. Because China had nuclear weapons India felt threatened and developed nuclear weapons. Because India developed nuclear weapons, Pakistan felt threatened and developed nuclear weapons. And the strength of religious fundamentalist terrorist groups in Pakistan has created an ever present and alarming risk that nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of 'non-State actors'-terrorist groups who have no respect for human life and who will take no notice of doctrines of 'deterrence' and 'mutually assured destruction' in the way governments might not unreasonably be expected to .

We must do all we can to try to break every link in this dangerous nuclear chain.

The Prague speech by President Barack Obama, setting out a vision of a world without nuclear weapons, is more than welcome. The progress in discussions between the United States and Russia on a replacement nuclear weapons reduction Treaty for START is just as welcome. It is America and Russia who have the vast majority of the world's nuclear weapons, so other countries can hardly be expected to disarm if there is no leadership coming from America and Russia. But the efforts of America and Russia alone will not make the world safe from nuclear attack, far from it.

They must be complemented by steps taken by the other nuclear powers to also disarm.

China, India, and Pakistan will, like America and Russia, need to have bilateral or trilateral discussions, so that reducing their nuclear hardware will not be seen within their own countries as prejudicial to their national security.

Our task is to re-energise the international political debate, against a background of really a decade or more in which the international community has been sleepwalking when it comes to both non-proliferation and especially disarmament.

Let me set out the current situation, drawing on some of the evidence presented to the Treaties Committee by Gareth Evans.

We confront a plethora of serious problems:-

1. The emergence of India and Pakistan as nuclear armed States in their own right, outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
2. The emergence of serious problems with both North Korea and Iran.
3. Arms control negotiations between the United State and Russia have been spinning their wheels for the past decade.
4. At the 2005 NPT Review Conference it was impossible to reach agreement on any language at all about the way forward.
5. The civil nuclear industry is likely to expand, partly as a response to global warming. This creates potential proliferation risks. There are already an estimated 27,000 nuclear warheads out there.
6. There is an ongoing crisis of confidence in the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
7. The risk of accident and miscalculation remains significant. At the start of February two nuclear-armed submarines managed to collide in mid-ocean. And then there were the 6 strategic missiles which went missing for a day or two from a US air base until somebody discovered them and brought them back.

Against this challenging background, let me now examine some of the contemporary issues, and indicate where I think we are heading, and how we might most usefully make progress. As Gareth Evans has said, an extraordinarily useful role can be played by a creative, energetic middle power like Australia that has genuine global respect on these issues.

2: The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) bans parties from carrying out any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, and requires them to prohibit and prevent any nuclear explosions in their territory. It is both a practical step towards disarmament and an effective non-proliferation measure.

This Treaty is incredibly important in halting the momentum for nuclear proliferation and ultimately ringbarking the nuclear weapons tree. In order for the Treaty to come into effect it still needs to be ratified by each of the United States, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Indonesia, Egypt, Israel and Iran.

A very tall order, small wonder it hasn't happened. But the announcement by Barack Obama that he supports ratification of the CTBT, and will seek to have this Treaty ratified by the Senate, has given it new life and momentum.

Its fate in the Senate is, however, uncertain, and it is pretty apparent that prospects in the US could not stand another unsuccessful attempt at Senate ratification. Therefore President Obama is not expected to move on this until he's confident he has the numbers. The timing of this might not be helpful in terms of the forthcoming NPT Review Conference.

But this needn't reduce us all to impotent bystanders, wishin and hopin for the best from the Senate. Dr George Perkovich, from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, has said in evidence to the Treaties Committee; first, that friends of the CTBT should go to the countries whose ratification of the CTBT is needed, and seek their agreement that if the United States and China ratify the CTBT, that they will do so as well – that these countries will not be the impediment to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty entering into force. And his second suggestion was very specific for Australia – that we should say to the US Senate, that signing of the CTBT is not “abandoning US allies” – that we do not seek the protection of the US nuclear umbrella and would welcome a world without nuclear weapons.

I support both of these proposals.

The Indonesian Deputy Special Representative to the United Nations has told me that Indonesia will ratify the CTBT, saying “We are neither a nuclear power nor a bad guy, so it makes no sense to promise not to have nuclear weapons, but not promise not to use them”. This is good news.

3: The Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

The basic objective of a Fissile Material Cut off Treaty (FMCT) is to ban production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Parties would undertake not to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons, and to accept international inspections of their facilities and their materials to verify their compliance.

The Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty is another extremely important initiative. It would stop countries building up fissile materials and therefore reduce the risks of proliferation and limit the risk of nuclear arms races.

There was a very significant breakthrough in May at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. This Conference is comprised of 65 nation states, which includes the five nuclear weapons states (The United States, United Kingdom, France, China and Russia) and the three nuclear capable states outside the NPT (India, Pakistan and Israel).

It has been going around in circles for years, but in May it agreed to a work program, including work on a Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty.

This was a major breakthrough. There has since been backsliding at the Conference, with delays in establishing the working groups.

It seems that some countries do not want the Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty to succeed. China, India, and Pakistan all seem intent on keeping their options open in terms of fissile material production. Australia and other countries who want the FMCT will need to work hard at breaking these links – the domino effect which presently leads these nuclear powers to be reluctant converts to the cause.

There is certainly the risk, if not the actuality, of a fissile material arms race in South Asia, and China has not declared a moratorium on the production of fissile materials.

An FMCT would oblige Israel, India and Pakistan to stop producing fissile material and bring their facilities under international supervision. The value of this is that these countries could become part of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime without having to join the NPT as non-weapon states.

Australia and the other non nuclear states should be working as hard as we can on making this Treaty a reality.

4: A Nuclear Weapons Convention?

There has been a considerable move among non – government organisations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Parties to such a Convention would be required to declare all nuclear weapons, nuclear facilities and nuclear material in their possession. There would then be five phases on the road to elimination:-

1. Taking nuclear weapons off alert.
2. Removing weapons from deployment.
3. Removing nuclear warheads from their delivery vehicles.
4. Disabling the warheads, removing and disfiguring the ‘pits’ where the weapons are stored, and
5. Placing the fissile material under international control.

Now these are all of course worthy aspirations, but I do need to report that I have encountered quite a strong sentiment among United States NGOs that a lot of political capital could be invested and used up in securing a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and we would still have to undertake the detailed negotiations necessary to make any of these steps actually happen. In other words it could act as a distraction.

Gareth Evans has given the Treaties Committee a timeframe for action involving a Short Term, Medium Term, and Longer Term.

The Short Term encompasses next year's NPT Review Conference and the next couple of years. He has suggested that key goals for the short term should be

- Improving the verification mechanism under the NPT, through universally embraced take-up of the Additional Protocol.
- Achieving the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and
- Resolving the present issues around Iran and North Korea.

Gareth Evans' medium term stretches out to perhaps 2025 and might be described as a 'base camp'. All nuclear armed states would be involved, the number of warheads would be dramatically limited, there would be a universal commitment to "no first use of nuclear weapons", which would be reinforced by limitations on operational deployment – essentially locking nuclear weapons away and separating them into bits.

In the longer term, we would seek to reach the summit – actual zero nuclear weapons. To say this is hard is a statement of the bleeding obvious, but it is also the thing which mobilises and energises people, and it should never be lost sight of.

The United States can play a major, leading role. Its ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty should bring great pressure to bear on others to do likewise.

It can also play a leading role in negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty in Geneva.

It is involved in negotiations with Russia for a replacement Treaty for START, and the Moscow Treaty, SORT.

These negotiations can and should lead to deep reductions in nuclear arsenals.

It can initiate dialogues with China and other relevant countries as well as Russia. And its Nuclear Posture Review needs to lead to a narrowing down of the US doctrine concerning the use of nuclear weapons, such that a clear signal is given that nuclear weapons are only to deter other countries using nuclear weapons against the US and its allies, and not for any other purposes.

5: The NPT Review Conference in 2010

We only get one of these Conferences every five years and the last one in 2005 was a flop.

I mentioned early in my remarks that there is something of a crisis of confidence in the NPT. So it is hard to overstate the importance of the next Review Conference. So what are the prospects and barriers to progress next year?

Michael Moodie, from the Global Futures Forum, a New York based NGO, has said to me that simply getting the 13 steps agreed to back in 2000 reaffirmed would be an achievement. If that sounds modest, I guess it reflects the reality that in the last decade the cause of non-proliferation and disarmament has gone backwards.

An immediate issue for the 2010 Review Conference is Egypt's demands for progress towards a Middle East Nuclear Free Zone. This issue played a major role in the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. Countries need to be mindful of this and discuss an outcome which will avoid a similar debacle.

As well as tackling this issue head on, it is important that the 2010 Conference be seen to have potential, to be a thing of value.

I believe there will be less risk of Egypt or anyone else sidetracking the Conference if it is seen to be a thing of value, and this depends on the attitudes of many countries towards it.

It is important to understand that the friction between the nuclear haves and the nuclear have-nots is alive and well. Throughout the history of the NPT the nuclear haves have stressed non-proliferation - that is, making sure no other country gets nuclear weapons, and the nuclear have-nots have stressed disarmament - that is, obliging the nuclear armed countries to get rid of their bombs. The countries of the Non Aligned Movement - essentially nuclear have-nots - are frustrated by the lack of progress on disarmament.

Developing countries complain of double standards - they point out that all of the IAEA inspections are of the non-nuclear states, and say "we don't see 'disarmament agencies' being set up by the nuclear haves - the countries with nuclear weapons."

The Deputy Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Hasan Kleib, has said to me that many non-aligned countries believe that bad conduct has been rewarded - for example that India, outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty and flagrantly in breach of it, has been given a civil nuclear co-operation agreement, and that Iran was promised material assistance if they gave up seeking to acquire nuclear weapons.

While the latter proposal never eventuated, it leaves countries wondering about the value of the NPT.

Too often this difference of approach has led to international stalemate. Clearly we need to have action on both fronts - non-proliferation and disarmament.

So what should we be hoping for, and more importantly, campaigning for, from the 2010 NPT Review? I think the next steps need to be in the direction of

1. Bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force.
2. Negotiating and completing a treaty banning the production of fissile materials.
3. Taking all existing nuclear weapons off alert.
4. Instituting key confidence building measures, including no-first-use declarations and negative security assurances.
5. Stopping all programs to build new nuclear weapons and the infrastructure with which to build them.
6. Stopping new projects to replace ageing warheads with new, more sophisticated capabilities.
7. Strengthening the I.A.E.A.'s safeguards, powers of inspection, and penalties for non-compliance, and
8. Developing a Multilateral Fuel Bank.

The first five of these proposals were put to the Treaties Committee in a submission from the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

I am aware of resistance from within the Non-Aligned Movement and the developing countries to the idea of the IAEA carrying out the nuclear security function. But my view is that every country has a stake in stopping other countries from developing nuclear weapons. It is not enough to say, because we are not developing nuclear weapons, we are doing everything we can.

The NPT Additional Protocol arose following revelations in 1991 concerning Iraq's nuclear program. The Additional Protocol is an agreement concluded between a country and the IAEA which broadens the information to be reported to the IAEA, and provides for access by safeguards inspectors.

It enhances the IAEA's ability to accurately assess whether a country has undeclared nuclear activities. This is very important. Australia has made the Additional Protocol a condition of uranium supply to non nuclear weapon states.

We, and all the non nuclear weapons states, should campaign for universal adherence to the Additional Protocol, and for it to be an internationally recognised condition of uranium supply.

Non nuclear weapons states should also give up their aspirations for an indigenous enrichment capacity in favour of a Multilateral Fuel Bank.

It cannot be denied that the interest in nuclear power could lead to a scattering of uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing technologies.

These technologies can produce fissile materials that are directly usable in nuclear weapons – high enriched uranium and separated plutonium.

It is clearly much better if states with nuclear power programs do not go down this path – the path of developing national enrichment or reprocessing capabilities. A Multilateral Fuel Bank would place these sensitive states of the cycle under international control. States which want nuclear energy would be given access to it, without the risks that come with countries all over the world moving to nuclear power.

I believe Australia and the other non-nuclear weapons states should be campaigning hard for a Multilateral Fuel Bank.

6. Conclusion

There are so many nuclear weapons in the world that everyone in this room can expect to be fully occupied for the remainder of their lives in the fight to get rid of them. We have a long way to go before we have to look too closely at what a world without nuclear weapons would actually look like.

But I think it is necessary to have at least a little bit of a look at such a world, because otherwise we run the risk of bumping our heads up against resistance that seems illogical to us, but is there all the same. I believe, and people in this room believe, that a world without nuclear weapons would be a safer world. But the reality is that in every country which possesses nuclear weapons there are defence planners, policy makers, and indeed ordinary citizens, who are anxious that if they give up all their nuclear weapons, that they may be vulnerable to attack from another country – a country with superior conventional weapons, or a larger army, or a motive to attack them.

Because of this I believe that ultimate success in ridding the world of nuclear weapons will also depend on being able to achieve substantial disarming of conventional forces and weapons as well. There needs to be more bi-lateral, multi-lateral, and global discussion about reducing the size and reach of the armies of the world.

And we need to do more to address the underlying causes of war and terrorism. Analysts spend a great deal of time assessing the political and religious factors leading to the scourge of terrorism and war in the modern world. They spend less time noting the underlying cause – conflict over scarce resources – scarce land, scarce water, scarce oil – brought about by increasing population.

A Pentagon Report in 2007 detailed a range of scenarios in which population displacement caused by global warming, and triggered by extreme weather events, would lead to border tensions and armed conflict.

Some examples the Report gave were:-

- India-China tensions caused by population displacement arising from the disappearance of Tibetan plateau glaciers and associated flooding and soil erosion.
- Refugee exodus to northern Australia from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Papua New Guinea following displacement of tens of millions by coastal flooding.
- One metre sea level rise wipes out 100km of arable land in Bangladesh, causing refugees to leave Bangladesh en masse for India.
- Flooding in Thailand causes population displacement and the threat of civil war.
- Coastal flooding of the Mekong Delta by 2020 causes lost food production, damages the water supply, and spreads disease in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

An Oxford University study has estimated that 26 million Bangladeshis, 73 million Chinese and 20 million Indians are at risk of displacement from rising sea levels.

I made some of these points recently in a speech I gave to Parliament calling for stabilisation of the global population, and stabilisation of Australia's population. Now I know this is straying some way from what your organisation would consider to be its core business.

But it is often said that in order to be able to achieve your objective you have to be able to visualise it. An Aussie Rules footballer shooting for goal has to visualise the ball sailing between the posts, and a garage rock and roll band has to visualise themselves performing at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl.

And so too we need to visualise a world without nuclear weapons, and that means thinking about what risks, as well as benefits, come with that, and intelligently planning to address them.

For, borrowing a little from the late, great Edward Kennedy, the dream of a world without nuclear weapons is a dream that must never die. We must never accept that it is alright to live in a world where some people have the power to kill tens of millions of their fellow human beings, and make the planet uninhabitable, in a heart beat.

This must never be acceptable.

I thank you for the work you have done on this noble cause for many years, and I wish you every success in the promising, but challenging, days to come.