

**“A TIME FOR ACTION:
THE REPORT OF THE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
COMMISSION”**

Jayantha Dhanapala

7th WORLD SUMMIT OF PEACE LAUREATES – “ATOMS FOR PEACE OR FOR WAR”, ROME.



I thank the organizers for their kind invitation to the World Summit of the Nobel Peace Laureates. It is also good to be in Rome the Eternal City whose grandeur never fades. This year's summit has the special distinction of being the first since the annual World Summit established a permanent secretariat. The institutionalization of what has become a significant event in the global conference calendar must be welcomed. It will give these gatherings the form and substance it requires to sharpen its focus on the global problems of our time and to ensure the impact of its deliberations and conclusions.

I congratulate Dr. Mohammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh for winning the Nobel Peace Prize this year. I am personally delighted by this because it is an honour for South Asia where I come from and an affirmation that the elimination of poverty is an essential component of a stable peace.

I also welcome the choice of issue for discussion this year. 'Atoms for Peace or for War' is not only relevant to one of my long-standing professional concerns but it is also among the most urgent issues today. It is over fifty years since President Eisenhower's famous speech on "Atoms for Peace" and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - created as a consequence of Eisenhower's lofty vision - celebrates its fiftieth anniversary next year.

The Director-General of the IAEA speaking at the UN General Assembly on 31 October this year wisely focussed on the twin issues of 'atoms for peace' and 'atoms for war' when he said, " Fifty years after the Atoms for Peace initiative, the time has come to think of a new framework for the use of nuclear energy – a framework that accounts for both the lessons we have learned and the current reality. This new framework should in my view include:

1. innovative nuclear technology that is inherently safe, proliferation resistant and more economical;
2. universal application of comprehensive safeguards and the additional protocol;
3. concrete and rapid progress towards nuclear disarmament;
4. a robust international security regime; and
5. an effective and universal nuclear safety regime."

Unfortunately there has recently been an unbalanced focus on the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons without any attention being paid to the vital question of nuclear disarmament. Non-proliferation and disarmament are two faces of the same coin. We cannot have one without the other. We certainly do not want to have any more nuclear weapon armed countries. We do need to be reassured that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran are not going on the same road taken by the USA, the Russian Federation, UK, France, China, Israel, India and Pakistan.

That does not mean that the world accepts the monopoly that these states have over nuclear weapons. Nor do we tolerate the apartheid of some nuclear "haves" and the others as nuclear "have-nots".

We cannot also distinguish arbitrarily between 'good' proliferators and 'bad' proliferators. The excellent example of South Africa which abandoned its nuclear weapons programme and joined the Treaty for the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state needs to be emulated. Somehow and somewhere we have lost sight of the fundamental danger of nuclear weapon possession by any state because of the very destructive nature of this weapon. Like Janus, the Roman god with two faces, all scientific inventions of humankind have a beneficial use and a malefic use. So is it with nuclear power. We must promote the good and ban the bad. That is why the recently produced report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission - chaired by the highly respected Dr. Hans Blix and in which I was privileged to serve- recommended the outlawing of all weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons.

Let me briefly explain my theme today. I have had a life-long conviction that nuclear arms must be eliminated by a verifiable treaty. It is a conviction that I have honestly voiced again and again and for which I have had to pay a heavy price. The world has banned biological weapons and chemical weapons, which have caused untold suffering in past conflicts. The only weapon of mass destruction that remains unbanned is the nuclear weapon which is prominent in the arsenals of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and of three countries outside the NPT - Israel, India and Pakistan. The fallacious argument continues to be made that one cannot 'disinvent' nuclear weapons. Well, we did not disinvent biological weapons or chemical weapons. We simply outlawed them. And in the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention we have an effective Secretariat to implement the Convention and to verify the ban.

Eisenhower - a Republican President of the United States and a distinguished military man -in his famous "Atoms for Peace" speech significantly called for the "reduction or elimination of atomic materials for military purposes" and for removing "this (nuclear) weapon out of the hands of the soldiers". It is a theme that indisputably links this speech to his equally famous 'military industrial complex' speech. He saw the folly of relying on a non-proliferation strategy alone. In this speech he also rejected the concept of deterrence which prevailed much after his time. He opposed the use of nuclear weapons in the certain knowledge that it would cause unmitigated disaster for the human race. "Surely no sane member of the human race could discover victory in such desolation," he said.

With the end of the Cold War a smug complacency has settled in regarding the threat of nuclear war. Public opinion has been anaesthetized. NGOs in the disarmament area have been starved of funds to conduct their important work to educate and mobilize the public. It was civil society that demanded and achieved a ban on nuclear testing in the atmosphere and which finally capped this with the Comprehensive Nuclear Test

Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. With no transparency from any of the nuclear weapon armed countries on their weapon stocks, we have forgotten that there are still an estimated 27,000 nuclear weapons; 12,000 of them actively deployed and many of them on alert status to be launched on warning. The danger of a nuclear holocaust by accident or design remains very real. No significant arms control measure let alone disarmament agreement has taken place for many years. The NPT Review Conference of 2005 failed to agree on a Final Document although that same treaty was extended in 1995 under my Presidency with specific undertakings being accepted by the nuclear weapon states - undertakings which were reiterated and amplified at the NPT Review Conference of 2000. Not just I personally but all the non-nuclear weapon state parties to the NPT must feel a sense of betrayal of trust over the failure of the nuclear weapon states to fulfill their promises. Later last year at the 60th anniversary UN General Assembly not one line could be agreed upon in the Outcome Document on disarmament.

Nuclear weapons are in a special category. Not only will their scale of destruction be infinitely greater than conventional weapons but also their impact on the ecology, which supports human existence, and its genetic effects on the survival of the human race could be catastrophic. In the Cold War the so-called Mutual Assured Destruction doctrine (MAD), paradoxically, gave us some hope that these awful weapons would not be used. Today the actual use of nuclear weapons is seriously planned and new types of weapons, such as bunker-busters, are being designed lowering the threshold of use alarmingly. That is why we must at this Rome Nobel Laureates Summit call for a revival of nuclear disarmament. We cannot with any credibility or logical consistency condemn the nuclear tests of the DPRK or the failure of Iran to comply with the IAEA's Safeguards Agreement unless we also make progress in reducing and eliminating the nuclear weapons already in the possession of the eight states who have them. We cannot accept the argument that nuclear deterrence is good for some and unacceptable for others. There are no safe hands for weapons as destructive as nuclear weapons. Besides with today's problems of global terrorism we cannot take the risk of nuclear technology and materials leaking to terrorist groups. There are already too many documented instances of thefts and illegal trafficking in nuclear material and nuclear technology.

It is for these reasons that in my final year as UN Under-Secretary-General I proposed that there should be an International Commission on WMD. Secretary-General Kofi Annan was unwilling to have such a Commission function under the aegis of the UN. Sweden through its courageous Foreign Minister at the time, the late Anna Lindh, accepted the challenge and set up the Commission with Dr. Hans Blix as Chairman. Fourteen of us drawn from different countries began our work early in 2004 meeting in different capitals and exchanging ideas with scholars, researchers and diplomats from a wide range of countries over a period of more than two years. Finally in June of this year we presented the final report to the Secretary-General of the UN and it has been tabled as a document of the UN. Dr. Blix has also spoken to the First Committee of the UN last month apart from addressing numerous audiences and media conferences in different parts of the world.

Our Commission felt that the time for action on weapons of mass destruction has come especially with regard to nuclear weapons. We see them as weapons of terror because they are in fact intended to intimidate those who do not possess these weapons. As the Canberra Commission, in which I also served, said in 1996 " Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them". The WMD Commission reiterates this adding that "So long as any such weapons remain in any state's arsenal, there is a high risk that they will one day be used, by design or accident. Any such use would be catastrophic."

A co-operative rule based world order requires us to have a nuclear ban negotiated and administered through a multilateral institution. For this purpose we need to convene a World Summit which will discuss WMD and agree on a programme of action. The momentum for that must begin here in Rome.

A total of 60 recommendations have been made in the WMD Commission Report. They include –

- .. The need to agree on general principles of action
- .. The need to reduce the danger of existing arsenals by making deep reductions; securing them from theft especially by terrorist groups; the need to take weapons off their alert status, prohibit the production of fissionable material and having no-first-use pledges by those who have nuclear weapons
- .. The prevention of proliferation through the entry into force of the CTBT; implementing the commitments of the nuclear-weapon states under the NPT; continuing negotiations with DPRK and Iran to ensure their non-nuclear weapon status while assuring them of their security and their right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; and international arrangements for the supply of enriched uranium fuel and disposal of spent fuel
- .. Working purposefully for a ban on nuclear weapons within a reasonable time frame; encouraging nuclear weapon-free zones; achieving the universalization of the CWC and BWC

The implementation of these recommendations will not be easy. There are strong forces at work and that is why the moral weight of the Nobel Peace Laureates is so essential. Already at the last First Committee meetings in the UN a resolutions for an Arms Trade Treaty was adopted by an overwhelming majority and work will soon begin with a group of experts. This was supported by a group of Nobel Peace Laureates. Our meeting in Rome can provide the impetus for implementing the recommendations of the WMD Commission by calling initially for a World Summit .We would then have begun a movement - a groundswell which will be supported by civil society in the same way that the ICBL led civil society towards the Mine Ban Convention.

We will not be alone because already supporters for the cause of outlawing nuclear

weapons are mobilising themselves. ICAN is the name of a new campaign of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, (IPPNW), the doctors that won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work on nuclear weapons in 1985. They won that prize because they had worked in the peace movement alongside millions of other people who marched, wrote and organized a loud and vibrant call for disarmament. The goal of ICAN is to educate whole new generations of people about the nature of nuclear weapons, and to show them that a nuclear-weapons-free world is not only possible but absolutely necessary to our common survival. The campaign will be launched in March/April 2007, with a new version of the model Nuclear Weapons Convention, and a series of events around the world, several of which will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ground breaking declaration by Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer, the first major public appeal by a physician calling on the public to mobilise in opposition to nuclear weapons.

The doctors and health professionals are working with others, including UN Associations, the Mayors for Peace and others, forging joint collaborations towards abolition of nuclear weapons. The ICAN campaign, and the Mayors CANT "Cities Are Not Targets" campaign will involve mayors inviting doctors to inform city councils about nuclear dangers, and both mayors and doctors will make joint presentation to senior government officials, combining strengths and sharing the burden, a particularly good model for driving the message home to national and international decision-makers.

Let me conclude by thanking the Permanent Secretariat of the Nobel Peace Laureates, and especially the Presidents of the Scientific Committee Mikhail Gorbachev and Walter Veltroni, for the excellent organizational arrangements and the hospitality extended to us.

(Jayantha Dhanapala was the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs from 1998 to 2003 and is a former Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the USA)