

***“Gaining Confidence in Nuclear
Disarmament Steps”***

**Address by the Honorable
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One year ago, the Middle Powers Initiative – an international non-governmental coalition of which I am privileged to chair – began a process we called the “Article VI Forum,” named after the article of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty committing all states parties to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Article VI Forum began out of the crisis of the 2005 NPT Review Conference trying to find a way around the institutional and procedural deadlocks that beset the nuclear disarmament agenda. MPI sincerely believes that, with the stakes for humanity so high, there must be progress. Middle power countries, working in a non-adversarial environment, and focusing on goals for which there is virtual agreement, can and must build a framework to repair the non-proliferation regime. Our faith in the rule of law, multilateral cooperation, and the call of necessity inspires confidence that disaster is not inevitable and success is possible.

The Article VI Forum is an initiative intended to stimulate and shape effective responses to the crisis of the non-proliferation/disarmament regime manifested by the breakdown of the 2005 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The aim is to advance international cooperation to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to fulfill existing commitments to achieve the reduction and elimination of nuclear arsenals. The Forum helps to reassert the centrality of nuclear disarmament and the validity of multilateral negotiations.



It is precisely focused on paving the way to a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference. MPI takes the view that the NPT cannot withstand two successive failed review conferences. Thus we seek to influence the preparatory process to ensure that political agreement on basic items can be reached to fulfill commitments to “systematic and progressive” nuclear disarmament, as called for in Article VI of the NPT and reinforced by the International Court of Justice.

When the Middle Powers Initiative convened the first meeting of the Article VI Forum October 3, 2005 at the United Nations, New York, we were greatly encouraged at the strong endorsement given this new initiative by the 28 participating States. Our optimism has grown with each new consultation. In March 2006 we met in The Hague, The Netherlands and in September in Ottawa, Canada. We are laying the groundwork now for a fourth session to be held just prior to the first preparatory meeting of the NPT states parties in the spring of 2007. The Hague consultation focused on key legal, political and technical issues that need to be addressed to overcome security concerns of the Nuclear Weapons States, which are currently preventing them from commencing negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament. In Ottawa, we examined five core issues – including a cut-off of fissile materials and taking nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert – and the possible strategies

for making these proposals realities. The next meeting will seek to synthesize all we have learned with the goal of making a substantive impact on the NPT review process.

Our consultation in the Canadian capital on September 28-29 centered on the premise that the next review conference in 2010 of the NPT, the central instrument that is supposed to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, not repeat the failure of the 2005 review. Twenty-five nations took part in that session, including for the first time, two nuclear weapon states, China and the United Kingdom (the other three were also invited but declined to attend). In another first of which I am particularly pleased, the meeting was addressed by Canada's Foreign Minister Peter MacKay – the first time a foreign minister has addressed an Article VI Forum gathering. In welcoming the participants, Minister MacKay said, "Canada recognizes and supports the valuable role that civil society can play in the NPT Review Process. Our support for this meeting here in Ottawa today is a tangible sign of that belief."

By the end of the two day session, I was truly heartened by the creativity and enthusiasm demonstrated by the governments present, both in terms of advancing the nuclear disarmament agenda and in support of the work of the Article VI Forum. At the conclusion, I said that MPI "takes it as a hallmark that we are in business to help the NPT. We are committed to the NPT," adding that MPI stands ready to assist states in ensuring a positive outcome for the NPT review process.

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We take very much to heart Secretary General Kofi Annan's warning that the world is "sleepwalking" towards a possible nuclear catastrophe. The leaders and officials of these governments along with knowledgeable leaders of civil society understand that the day will arrive when either nuclear weapons are eliminated or the world will be devastated by a nuclear attack. One or the other will happen. No objective person, informed on the gravity of the situation, can deny it.



Left to right: Former South African President De Klerk, Senator Douglas Roche, O.C., IPB President Tomas Magnussen

Despite the institutional and procedural problems we face in the nuclear disarmament agenda, MPI believes that the international community stands on the threshold of the construction of a viable plan leading to a nuclear weapons-free world. In this current cycle of history, some might argue that only minimal progress toward achieving the elimination of nuclear weapons is being made. Actually, the Middle Powers Initiative believes that a historical momentum is building up. Though the obstacles are formidable, nuclear proponents are finding that they have less and less ground to stand on to justify retention. The vast majority of world public opinion favours nuclear disarmament. The creative development of ideas at the Article VI Forum will send a positive message to a waiting world that serious work is being done to help humanity attain a nuclear weapons-free world.

Consider the elements on which there was wide support at the 2005 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty:

- Nuclear Weapon States must stop nuclear sharing for military purposes under any kind of security arrangements;
- The most effective way to prevent nuclear terrorism is the total elimination of nuclear weapons;
- International action to stop proliferation is essential;
- Building upon the decisions taken at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, including the “unequivocal undertaking” for total nuclear disarmament, no new nuclear weapons should be developed;
- Anticipating the early entry-into-force of the CTBT, the moratorium on testing should be maintained;
- The Nuclear Weapons States must respect existing commitments regarding security assurances pending the conclusion of multilaterally negotiated legally binding security assurances for non-nuclear States Parties to the Treaty;
- Nuclear weapons-free zones strengthen the non-proliferation regime and deserve to receive security assurances;
- Assurances are not applicable if any beneficiary is in material breach of its own non-proliferation and disarmament obligations.

In addition, there were many practical and popular proposals for making progress in specific areas. These proposals, put forward in working papers by States and groups of States – if given their proper due – would do much to strengthen the Treaty that all States Parties say they want to survive. Opposition by a small number of States cannot diminish the value of this work.

There is, then, a solid basis for stating that a viable plan for progress in nuclear disarmament exists. We are close to having a common vision for the way forward. The Article VI Forum is designed to create a space for like-minded governments to explore in a stimulating and informal environment ways and means to advance that agenda.

In the Article VI Forum, we combine long-range vision and short-term practicalities. Our work can truly move the world to safety and true human security.

Thank you.

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