



briefing

[#05/4]

Nuclear Disarmament and the Global Summit

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Five years ago, heads of states and governments met at the UN to issue a memorable Millennium Declaration. The language was appropriate to the occasion:

We will spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States, which has claimed more than 5 million lives in the past decade.... We resolve ... to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons....

The chief value of another summit five years later, the September 14-16, 2005 High-level Plenary Meeting (HLPM) of the General Assembly, is the opportunity to assess progress made toward implementing those compelling objectives, to confirm ongoing commitment to them, and to identify priority policies designed to realize them.

The latest draft outcome statement (UN 2005) is not particularly elegant or clarion in its section on disarmament, but it is nevertheless constructive in that it does embody (in some cases implicitly rather than explicitly) some widely accepted **disarmament principles**:

1. That disarmament is an essential component of efforts to advance international peace and security (para 57);
2. That universal and full adherence to and compliance with the three treaties¹ that provide the legal framework for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction are essential to enhance peace and security (para 58);
3. That those states that already had nuclear weapons when the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was negotiated in 1968 are obliged by the treaty to eliminate their nuclear arsenals (para 60.ii); and

4. That all other states are pledged not to acquire nuclear weapons; furthermore, their access to and use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes is contingent on their verifiably foregoing nuclear weapons (paras 59 and 60.iv).

The draft also declares support for a number of **current policy imperatives** – policies that are widely regarded as essential to advancing nuclear disarmament in the current historical context.

1. A testing moratorium until a permanent ban is brought into effect through the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) (para 60.iii);
2. Promotion of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ) (para 60.v);
3. A call for reaffirmation of Negative Security Assurances (NSA) by nuclear weapon states (NWS) (para 60.vi);
4. Strengthened non-proliferation safeguards through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (para 60.iv);
5. Controls over nuclear materials and preventing their spread to non-state actors (paras 60.ix, x, xiii); and
6. A Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) (para 60.xii).

There are, of course, many additional and important measures that did not make it into the draft, notably:

1. A commitment by NWS to progressively diminish the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines;
2. A commitment to principles of verification and irreversibility in disarmament; and
3. A reduction in the operational status of deployed nuclear forces (de-alerting).

But what is constructive in the draft is now under severe threat. The United States has since weighed in via its new UN Ambassador, John Bolton, to declare its opposition to most of the above principles and policies.

1. The US proposal would cut the link between disarmament and security (in para 57) and switch the focus to non-proliferation and preventing terrorist access to nuclear materials.
2. The US accepts the call to all states to accede to the NPT, CWC, and BTWC, but suggests a change from a “pledge to comply” with those Treaties to a call to “urge all states to comply” with them.
3. The US proposal would cut entirely the paragraph (60.ii) that appeals to NWS to eliminate their nuclear weapons through implementation of Article VI of the NPT.
4. The US proposal is also to cut the paragraphs (59 and 60.iv) that link access to nuclear materials and technology for peaceful purposes to compliance with the NPT.

The specific policies emphasized in the draft would meet a similar fate if US preferences were to be accepted: the paragraph on the testing moratorium and ban, as well as the reference to NWFZs, would also be cut. The paragraph on NSAs is accepted as is, and the US also supports the paragraphs on controlling nuclear materials. It would cut para 60.xiii, which promotes measures to prevent nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons technology and materials going to non-state actors (this paragraph is arguably redundant inasmuch as para 60.ix covers the same issue in the context of Security Council resolution 1540), and the US proposes to replace it with a paragraph on conventional weapons and Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS).² The US would cut the paragraph on FMCT and PAROS (a proposal in the UN Conference on Disarmament to prevent an arms race in outer space by prohibiting weapons deployments in space).

In other words, the proposed US changes would eviscerate the nuclear disarmament section of the

document. Very little would remain. States would still be urged to accede to the NPT (but that would be a largely hollow gesture, given the recent US move to give India all the benefits of nuclear cooperation even though it has nuclear weapons and is not a signatory to the NPT). The call for reiterated NSAs would stay (also hollow, given stated US prerogatives to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states). Three paragraphs focusing on control of nuclear material and the US-inspired Proliferation Security Initiative would remain.

The negotiations will continue up to and during the summit. Governments supportive of the current formulation, which include Canada,³ need to be encouraged to persist in the effort to include a strong commitment to nuclear disarmament in the declaration of the heads of states and governments.

Notes

¹ The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Conventions (CWC), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC).

² See Ploughshares Briefing 05-5. [Online]. Available from www.ploughshares.ca.

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Reference

UN 2005, “Revised draft outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005 submitted by the President of the General Assembly,” 5 August (A/59/HLPM/CRP.1/Rev.2). [Online]. Available from: http://www.un.org/ga/59/hl60_plenarymeeting.html.

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Project Ploughshares is an ecumenical agency of the Canadian Council of Churches that works with churches and related organizations, as well as governments and non-governmental organizations, in Canada and abroad, to identify, develop, and advance approaches that build peace and prevent war, and promote the peaceful resolution of political conflict.

“and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4)