

**Statement by Ambassador Hubert de La Fortelle,
Permanent Representative of France
to the Conference on Disarmament,
Head of the French Delegation,
on the occasion of the General Debate
of the Second session of the Preparatory Committee
of the 2005 NPT Review Conference**

Geneva, 28th April 2003

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by saying that France associates itself with the declaration of the European Union made by the Greek Presidency.

As a nuclear power, France wishes however to return to a number of points which are, in its view, of particular importance.

In agreeing to chair this second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, you have accepted a heavy responsibility at a difficult stage in the life of the NPT. However, I have no doubt that your personal capabilities, your experience and the assistance provided by your team will allow you to take the work of this forum forward to the most positive outcome possible. You can be sure that the French delegation will provide all possible support to ensure that the NPT emerges with renewed strength from this further session.

Proliferation

The strengthening of the NPT: this must indeed be our aim here.

I say this because it can never be repeated too often that the NPT is a vital instrument for international security and cooperation. However, it is facing grave problems at the present time.

If 188 States have become party to the NPT, it is first and foremost because they consider that it is in their interest that the number of States possessing nuclear weapons within the constraints of law should be kept at the lowest level. For this reason, they have abandoned the option of developing a nuclear arsenal. And it is also for this reason that States which had developed a nuclear arsenal at the time when the NPT was drafted agreed to move toward the implementation of measures to reduce that arsenal and towards complete and general disarmament under strict and effective international control.

However, while under Article VI of the Treaty the number of nuclear weapons in the possession of the five nuclear-weapon States has been drastically reduced since the end of the Cold War (and I wish to emphasise the fact that France has borne its full share of that effort) and while the prospect of global reduction remains assured for the years to come, we are obliged to note that the commitment to non-proliferation is not being scrupulously observed by some States.

The international community is in fact increasingly challenged by the proliferation of weapons of

mass destruction – nuclear, biological and chemical – and their delivery vehicles, non-compliance with NPT undertakings, and the risk that such weapons may be acquired by terrorists. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security, as the United Nations Security Council affirmed in 1992, and this is more than ever a concern today.

DPRK

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has not abided by its commitments to non-proliferation. It has developed a nuclear programme of military nature. Following this, it announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT. It expelled the IAEA inspectors and removed the instruments for surveillance of its nuclear facilities. It has returned to operation a plutonium-producing nuclear power plant whose function is not the generation of electrical power. It insists on its right to possess nuclear weapons. In addition, it is pursuing an ambitious ballistic missile programme. It possesses a chemical arsenal.

France states clearly that the integrity of the non-proliferation regime must be preserved.

To ensure this, North Korea must eliminate its military nuclear programme in a final and verifiable manner; it must comply totally with the undertakings it gave in signing the NPT and its safeguards agreement with the AIEA. It cannot evade its obligations by withdrawing from the Treaty: the withdrawal procedure is not designed to legitimise non-compliance with the Treaty and the development of nuclear weapons.

In the face of this challenge from North Korea, what is needed is active diplomacy, a political solution, a determination to reach a peaceful outcome, with involvement from all States concerned, notably those in the region, along with the adoption of strong and consistent language by all States Party present here. And, naturally, a clear commitment is also needed from the United Nations Security Council with a view to contributing to a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Iraq

This is of course not the first challenge to have faced the NPT. North Korea had already made its nuclear ambitions clear in 1993-1994. Previously, in 1990, we had discovered the existence of a military nuclear programme of substantial importance in Iraq. A sustained inspection programme, suspended in 1998, enabled this nuclear programme to be dismantled. The resumption of these inspections in an even more robust form, as decided last November by the Security Council, confirmed that the Iraqi programme had not been restarted. This programme would doubtless have made it possible, had it been continued, to provide answers to the remaining technical questions. It will be the responsibility of the inspectors to recommence their work and to submit their conclusions as soon as they are able.

Such instances should not mask the fact that other States are seeking to take advantage of the weaknesses of the non-proliferation regime.

IAEA safeguards

It is important that everything should be done to ensure that such situations cease to exist and do not arise again in the future. To achieve this, the system of IAEA safeguards for which the NPT provides

must be applied by all. There are too many States Party to the NPT which have still not fulfilled their obligation to sign a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA. Too few States have put in place an Additional Protocol. Nothing can justify such gaps in the non-proliferation regime. In this connection, I am happy to be able to announce to you that France, for its part, completed its ratification procedure for the Additional Protocol on 10 April last. The Agency must also have available to it the resources necessary to carry on its work effectively. For this reason, France is in favour of an increase in the Agency safeguards budget to meet its needs.

Transparency

It is important that we make full use of all existing instruments and ensure that they are effective over the long term. However, we must go beyond this as of now in order to remove the suspicion surrounding the nuclear programmes of certain countries. It is the responsibility of those States to assure full and complete transparency with respect to the entirety of their nuclear activities.

Iran

In this connection, Iran, following a series of revelations, has announced a wide-ranging and ambitious nuclear programme. This programme, due to its scale, its diversity and its technical sophistication, is a source of concern as to its actual purpose. Indeed, how could questions not be raised when that country develops a programme for the enrichment of uranium and the production of heavy water without previously informing the IAEA and the States Party to the NPT? It is the responsibility of Teheran to commit itself resolutely and unambiguously to a policy of openness and transparency. Gestures have been made in this direction. But questions remain unanswered. The signing and actual implementation of an Additional Protocol with the IAEA are needed if confidence is to be restored.

Instruments to combat proliferation

Compliance with the obligations imposed by the NPT, its universalization, comprehensive IAEA safeguards, universalization of its Additional Protocol, transparency – all these are at the heart of the multilateral system for the prevention of nuclear proliferation. Other instruments play a key part: national controls on exports, supplier regimes. Their role is to ensure that nuclear technologies are disseminated in a responsible and safe manner and in compliance with NPT Articles I to IV.

These instruments can slow down and make more difficult and costly the task of any proliferant State, but they cannot prevent indefinitely such a State from equipping itself with a nuclear arsenal if it has the political will and the resources to do so.

In order to face up to States choosing to breach the undertakings they have given, it is important that the international community should have strong political instruments available to it, including the implementation of robust inspections under the authority of the United Nations Security Council.

It is France's wish that this Preparatory Committee meeting should endeavour to contribute to reflection on this topic, with a view to the forthcoming 2005 NPT Review Conference.

The involvement of the Security Council is indeed necessary. It is for this reason that France is proposing that a meeting of the Council should be held for the Heads of State and Government

during the next General Assembly of the United Nations. Such a Summit would have two aims: to take stock of the results of non-proliferation policy and to give decisive impetus to that policy.

The risk of WMD acquisition by terrorists

Mr. Chairman,

My country has not forgotten the lesson taught by 11 September 2001. There can be no doubt that the risk that weapons of mass destruction may be acquired by terrorists constitutes one of the grave threats now facing us. It is for this reason that the combat against terrorism and its causes must be pursued. To that end, global awareness is necessary. A global policy is also necessary.

France, which this year holds the G8 Presidency, is determined to take forward the G8 Global Partnership Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. In 2002, at the Kananaskis Summit, our eight nations had already decided to devote up to 20 billion dollars over ten years to this initiative. Concrete projects for cooperation are being conducted to promote non-proliferation, disarmament, the fight against terrorism and nuclear safety. In France's view, the elimination of excess Russian fissile materials is a priority. The dismantlement of decommissioned nuclear submarines, the destruction of chemical weapons, the reduction of quantities of toxins and hazardous biological pathogens being held, and the recruitment of former arms industry research staff constitute other major areas requiring action.

Six principles aimed at preventing terrorists, and those harbouring them, from procuring weapons of mass destruction and associated materials have been adopted by the G8. France asks all countries to sign up to these principles. As current holder of the G8 presidency, it will be organising on 2 May next a round table open to all delegations in one of the rooms of the Palais, in order to present the principles and to obtain the signatures of their countries.

The principal instrument available to us for the prevention of the risk of nuclear and radiological terrorism is the IAEA. The Agency has stepped up its activities in order to locate, secure and, where applicable, to repatriate radiological sources. All countries concerned must undertake and implement the necessary measures, with the help of the international community if this is needed. IAEA action has the unreserved support of my country, and in particular its Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. My country will seek to ensure that the dynamic is maintained by the organisation of an International Conference on this topic in 2004 in France will be maintained. Proposals will be put forward in this regard within the G8 framework.

Nuclear disarmament

Mr. Chairman,

Disarmament is one of the goals defined by the NPT. Article VI provides that the States Party should undertake to conduct negotiations on steps for nuclear disarmament and a general and complete disarmament treaty placed under strict and effective international control.

France has abided by this undertaking. In 1995, when the Treaty was extended indefinitely, a programme of action was adopted with three objectives: a complete ban on nuclear tests; the cessation of production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons; the determination to go forward steadily and systematically toward a reduction in quantities of nuclear weapons within the framework of general and complete disarmament.

France has devoted great effort to implementing this programme. In 1998, it signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. As early as 1996, it announced the final cessation of production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and closed down the relevant fissile material production facilities at Pierrelatte and Marcoule, of which it began the dismantlement. This is a complex, lengthy and costly task which will unfold over a number of years, and one which my country is the only one among the nuclear powers to have undertaken. France has also reduced the size of its nuclear arsenal by eliminating all its surface-to-surface nuclear weapons systems, reducing the number of ballistic missile nuclear submarines, and cutting by half the total number of its delivery vehicles. France has also, I would remind you, dismantled its nuclear testing centre in the Pacific.

These measures have been made possible by the fact that France has always adjusted the format of its nuclear arsenal to conform strictly to its actual need, according to the principle of sufficiency. They have been possible due to the post-Cold-War political and strategic climate.

I say this because, as the States Party emphasised in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, steps leading to disarmament must be taken in a way that promotes international stability, and be based on the principle of undiminished security for all. In this regard, it is clear that any new measure must be conditional on progress in the domains of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles, compliance with nuclear non-proliferation commitments, the strengthening of political instruments for crisis management and the prevention of acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists.

In the present context, a regionally-based approach provides one of the major ways forward to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This is a realistic approach involving the search for a political solution to regional tensions, latent or open conflicts, in order to allow progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. It is clear that any reduction in nuclear risk in South Asia must involve greater peace, security and stability in the region. In the Middle East, the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction is inseparable from the long-term establishment of peace. This is doubtless the key to NPT universalization and progress toward complete and general disarmament.

The peaceful uses of nuclear energy

Mr. Chairman,

The nuclear non-proliferation regime is not an end in itself. It was instituted and has been strengthened in recent years in order – and I quote the Statute of the IAEA – *"to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world"*. International cooperation in this field, directly between States, or through the IAEA or other bodies, is vital in this context.

Whether the aim is to develop nuclear energy for the production of electricity, or in the form of technical cooperation between the most advanced countries and developing countries, nuclear technologies constitute a formidable advantage for improvement in the living standards and conditions of national populations, as well as in their health and the protection of the environment.

France has resolutely chosen to go down this road itself, convinced as it is of the importance of nuclear power for a diversified energy policy, and as an essential contribution to sustainable development, given the fact that such energy produces no CO₂ emissions. France also takes an active part in international programmes aimed at defining – already – the nuclear reactors of the second half of the 21st century, which will be intrinsically safer, more economical and potentially less conducive to proliferation. France also attaches special importance to the possibility for

countries wishing to consolidate their development to use nuclear technologies for applications in domains as varied as medicine, agriculture, water resource management and the environment, to mention just a few.

Naturally, the use of such nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes is conceivable only if States abide firstly by their international undertakings and secondly by international standards and directives in the safety and security domain. International cooperation can only be strengthened if all concerned play by the rules. Far from being incompatible, nuclear non-proliferation and cooperation on the peaceful uses of the atom must on the contrary mutually reinforce each other. This will also inevitably require, as you will have already understood, reciprocated transparency and trust.

Procedure

Mr. Chairman,

The 2000 NPT Review Conference adopted an enhanced review process which has proved its worth during the 2002 session of the Preparatory Committee. This procedure allowed a debate which negotiation by consensus to arrive at a final document would probably have prevented. It would therefore be France's wish that you should be able to make full use of this procedure in organising this session.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.