

Remarks - Nuclear Disarmament

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Good Morning!

I would like to thank you for the invitation to speak; and I congratulate the organizers of this Vancouver Canadian International Model United Nations. And I want to welcome participants, and especially those who have travelled to Vancouver for this event.

The United Nations - our one hope for peace, harmony and equality for all on this planet - is often a cumbersome, unwieldy vehicle – and not always consistent or effective - ***but it is all we have***. And it is very important that people like you continue to support its continuity and the furtherance of its goals for world peace and security. And I commend you for your participation in this Model United Nations.

The UN Charter begins:

We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our life- time has brought untold sorrow to mankind.

This is the major purpose of the United Nations – peace, security and prosperity - to be achieved through conflict resolution, through peaceful negotiations, through the promotion of human rights, of justice, of social progress and improved standards of living, and most importantly – through disarmament.

Yet between the years since 1945 -the year the United Nations Charter entered into force - and the year 2000, there have been approximately 41 million people killed in ***armed conflict***; and the majority of these deaths were of civilians.¹

The world needs the United Nations – needs the support for it to realize its goals. The principal goal we should be seeking is disarmament - in the words of UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - in “general and complete disarmament.”

Disarmament has become increasingly important - yet something that is not taken seriously.

All of us here in this room - I imagine - have been born into this post-World War II highly technologicalized and militarized society and culture. Yet we have ***not*** always lived in such a state. The world changed dramatically after the development and use of the atomic bomb in 1945. The pre-World War II ***industrial society*** was transformed into a ***military*** industrial society, in which the military establishment and arms industry became the primary economic driving force – thus underpinning society and culture.

¹ *Milton Leitenberg, Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century*
Cornell University Peace Studies Program Occasional Paper #29 3rd ed.
©August 2003, 2005, 2006)

Former U.S. President, Dwight Eisenhower, in his 1961 farewell speech to the nation, said that prior to World War II the United States had no armaments *industry* and now – in 1961 - to quote him - “the total influence - economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal Government” ² (end of quote). And it is a situation we now take for granted.

We are so psychologically “determined” by our “technological representation of reality” that our solutions to critical situations “call for an even greater mobilization of our technology.”³

When a technology becomes a threat, another technological device is created to counter the threat. An example of this - and an issue of serious contention between Russia, and the US and NATO; and a threat to the nuclear disarmament process and world peace - is the response to the failure to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons and missile technology. This has resulted in the development of the United States Missile Defence system and the possibility of weapons in space, jeopardizing even further, the future of civilization.

We are engaged in an ever-ascending upward spiral of research, development, manufacture and deployment of high tech weapons, which are exceedingly dangerous to humanity. And we are so psychologically conditioned to accept the *status quo* that it is very difficult to *even* imagine a safer world – a world not bristling with this dangerous weaponry.

The current US military budget - which stands at more than half the combined military budgets of the rest of the world – is higher than during the Cold War. Moreover, the United States nuclear weapons budget is twenty percent higher than in the 1980s – the Reagan era of massive build-up of nuclear arsenals.

We have entered a new age of Cyber Warfare with the danger *of cyber attacks* and the danger of *cyber failure*. I am very pleased that the issue of cyber warfare is a subject engaged in this conference.

We are seeing a growing community of Internet hackers comprising of both individuals and states. Hackers – on a regular basis - attempt to penetrate the Pentagon and the nuclear weapons command and control systems, which is extremely dangerous and frightening because the command and control system is highly automated.

My area of specialization is nuclear disarmament and it is my view that we are fortunate – and it is perhaps miraculous - that we have survived until now without a nuclear war.

We have seen, in the last few years, the nuclear weapons states - legally committed to elimination of their weapons - *upgrading* their arsenals. We have seen the *proliferation* of nuclear weapons and nuclear technology.

² www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/indust.html

³ George Grant, *Technology & Justice*, Concord, 1986,16

We are confronted with a situation in which the realistic destiny of civilization is nuclear genocide. We are not in danger of a deliberate war – at least not at the moment!

However, we are at risk because of the continued existence of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert and targeted for immediate launch. We are at risk from nuclear accidents, from an accidental or mistaken launch; and from inadequate command/control and warning systems. We are at risk of acquisition of nuclear weapons, and their use by non-state terrorists because of the inadequate security for fissile materials and warheads. And we are at risk from proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In 1946 – 10 months after the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki – Bernard Baruch, the United States Representative to the newly formed, United Nations Atomic Energy Commission called for a ban of atomic weapons, and for atomic energy to be available only for peaceful uses.

“We are here,” he said, “to make a choice between the quick and the dead If we fail, then we have damned every man to be the slave of Fear. Let us not deceive ourselves: We must elect World Peace or World Destruction. Science has torn from nature a secret so vast in its potentialities that our minds cower from the terror it creates but science does not show us how to prevent its baleful use.” (end of quote)

Unfortunately, his call was not heeded because the United States and the Soviet Union did not trust each other – and thus would not commit to a ban.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty:

The next major attempt to control nuclear weapons was the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (the NPT) which opened for signature in July 1968, entered into force in 1970, and in 1995 was extended indefinitely. The NPT is the United Nations’ most legally-binding and universal treaty of all. The United Nations has 192 member countries. 188 of these states are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. There were 189 but North Korea because an NPT member, by right, obtained nuclear technology for peaceful purposes; then tested a nuclear weapon and withdrew from the Treaty. There are no consequences for withdrawal – no requirement even to return the technology. North Korea’s withdrawal seriously undermined the treaty.

This is an issue with which you may wish to engage in a future conference.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is a *three-way bargain* – a three-way commitment – by the five nuclear weapons states which tested and acquired nuclear weapons before the Treaty came into force - *to eliminate* their nuclear arsenals *in exchange* for the commitment by the 183 non-nuclear weapons states that they will neither acquire nor develop nuclear weapons. The Treaty forbids both horizontal and vertical proliferation, which means that the five designated nuclear weapons states must neither add to, nor upgrade the capability of, their arsenals - *and are committed to eliminating them.*

Unfortunately, from the disarmament perspective, the power of the United Nations is vested in the victors of World War II - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the nuclear powers. Regrettably, they hold the world in nuclear hostage because they are unwilling to fulfil their disarmament commitments under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; and continue to upgrade their arsenals.

The third part of the bargain is that the non-nuclear weapons states, in exchange for their commitment to forgo nuclear weapons, are given access to nuclear technology for peaceful uses of nuclear power. For this reason the Treaty is sometimes defined as a Faustian bargain because it is not difficult to transform either heavy or light water nuclear reactors from power generation, to the production of weapons material, as India and North Korea have demonstrated.

There are some 32 nuclear-capable states, some of whom, like Iran, are believed to be reconsidering their NPT commitments, and may find it tempting to follow North Korea's path because there are no consequences for withdrawal. It is a positive sign that Iran *has not* withdrawn from the NPT. It is excellent that this conference is engaging with the problem of Iran, and the possible further nuclear weaponization of the Middle East.

Because of a nuclear-armed Israel - which is thought to have 80 nuclear weapons - Middle East states, like Iraq and Libya sought - and now Iran is alleged to be seeking - to acquire nuclear weapon capability. I understand that other Middle Eastern countries - Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States - are giving thought to their nuclear possibilities because their region is home to one nuclear-weapon-State; and now Iran - though an NPT member - seems intent on developing nuclear weapons.

However, there is some good news!

The number of nuclear weapons has halved since the 1980s. Though this is hardly good news! Because the some 23,300 nuclear weapons that remain, combined, have the destructive capability of approximately seven hundred thousand (700,000) Hiroshima bombs.

But the numbers do continue to come down. President Obama appears to be following through on the commitment he made, in his Prague speech, to the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons. He is currently considering several options for reductions in *deployed* nuclear weapons with the low number under consideration, being 300. As President, he does have the right under the Constitution to make these cuts. He does not require Congressional approval.

However, even if he cut to this level there would be an equal number in reserve; and even if Russia cut equally, the remaining US and Russian weapons, plus those of the other nuclear weapons states, are enough to blow up the world.

In an age where a world war, involving weapons of mass destruction, could eliminate the entire human species, it is essential that we do not continue on this self-destructive path.

There are a plethora of dangers, of problems, seeking creative attention. I have focussed *on my concerns* while you are preparing to engage with the wider agenda of the United Nations. There is the need in all these areas for solutions requiring intellectual energy - the diplomatic skills of dialogue and negotiation - which I believe should be engaging the minds and energies of a multitude of young people like you. Your presence here demonstrates your concerns, your interest and your energies and I wish you success.

If nuclear disarmament is of interest to you, I suggest that you sign on to Global Zero which has a plan to eliminate nuclear weapons by 2030. Look at their website – www.globalzero.org - to learn about the Global Zero Chapters forming in high schools and universities around the world. And if any of you would like a copy of the documentary, *Countdown to Zero*, it is available without charge from The Simons Foundation and I also have some copies here.

I am pleased to welcome you here and hope that you are considering the furtherance of the goals of the United Nations to be the one in which you will undertake your life's work in order to create a less frightening, more peaceful twenty-first century.

Thank you very much!

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