

Canada Slams NPT Conference for Lack of Progress

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Concluding Statement at 7th NPT Review Conference by Ambassador Paul Meyer Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament and Head of Delegation:

"Four weeks ago, at the beginning of this Review Conference, Secretary General Kofi Annan reminded us of the historical reality and the still present danger of a nuclear weapon explosion. He recalled the great security benefits that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has bestowed over 35 years, but warned us against complacency in underlining the great stress the Treaty was currently under. I fear that this Review Conference has not risen to the Secretary General's call." Concluding Statement at 7th NPT Review Conference by Ambassador Paul Meyer Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament and Head of Delegation
New York

May 27, 2005

Mr President,

Four weeks ago, at the beginning of this Review Conference, Secretary General Kofi Annan reminded us of the historical reality and the still present danger of a nuclear weapon explosion. He recalled the great security benefits that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has bestowed over 35 years, but warned us against complacency in underlining the great stress the Treaty was currently under. I fear that this Review Conference has not risen to the Secretary General's call.

We have let the pursuit of short-term, parochial interests override the collective long-term interest in sustaining this Treaty's authority and integrity. We have seen precious time that might have been devoted to exchanges on substance and the development of common ground squandered by procedural brinkmanship. We have witnessed intransigence from more than one state on pressing issues of the day, coupled with the hubris that demands the priorities of the many be subordinated to the preferences of the few. Our community is weakened by the refusal of the delinquent to be held to account by its peers and by the defection from that community of a state without suffering any sanction. We have been hampered, frankly, by a lack of imagination and will to break with the status quo and adopt new ways of conducting our business.

Despite the scenes these rooms have witnessed over this month, the Review Conference must not be reduced to a theatre where we play at nuclear non-proliferation or disarmament. We cannot afford merely to suspend disbelief in enacting the NPT review process or the curtain is soon likely to come down on our production.

If there is a silver lining in the otherwise dark cloud of this Review Conference, it lies in the hope that our leaders and citizens will be so concerned by its failure that they mobilize behind prompt remedial action. In that regard, it is important to realise that what happened here reflects a larger reality. The world is confronting many of the same disarmament and non-proliferation challenges in other fora as well. If we want this Treaty's authority to be sustained, we need to tackle, on an urgent basis, some of these core challenges and resolve them in ways that generate real-world benefits for states and their citizens.

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To begin with, the NPT States Parties have to demonstrate support for, and implementation of, political commitments they have undertaken as part of this Treaty's process. To deny or denigrate the agreements of the past is to undermine all the political commitments made in implementation of the Treaty and to cast doubt upon the credibility of engagements entered into by governments. If governments simply ignore or discard commitments whenever they prove inconvenient, we will never be able to build an edifice of international cooperation and confidence in the security realm.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, Canada believes that the re-activation of multilateral activity is a key priority. The impasse at the Conference on Disarmament needs to be overcome in short order, so that crucial NPT-related issues, such as the proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, can be advanced. If this proves impossible, we will need to consider taking forward some of its work through other multilateral institutions. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty's entry into force, the top priority of successive Review Conferences, cannot be denied to the international community indefinitely. We will be consulting with other concerned states in preparation for this September's entry-into-force conference to ensure that this powerful instrument to counter horizontal and vertical proliferation is fully activated.

In the realm of nuclear non-proliferation, we will consistently promote the adoption of the IAEA's Comprehensive Safeguards agreement and the Additional Protocol as the safeguards standard under the NPT and as a condition of supply. We will lend practical support to strengthening national export controls, especially on proliferation-sensitive technologies, and to international cooperation on ensuring their effectiveness. This will yield an environment conducive to encouraging legitimate nuclear trade among States and putting an end to clandestine supply networks.. We will support the development of new multilateral nuclear fuel cycle initiatives that address non-proliferation concerns, while reinforcing the benefits to all states of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Both nationally and as a member of such groupings as the G8, the IAEA and the CD, Canada will endeavour to work with like-minded partners from all regions to come to grips with and overcome the real-world problems and crises that confront the NPT. It is our hope that other States Parties will be similarly motivated by the disappointing showing of this Conference and will join in a collective effort to ensure that we can continue to avoid the apocalyptic fate that the Secretary General reminded us is ever latent in the nuclear threat.

We believe this is a Treaty worth fighting for and we are not prepared to stand idly by while its crucial supports are undermined. To this end, it remains our belief that the health and implementation of the Treaty deserve to be the focus of an authoritative meeting for at least one week each year, empowering States Parties to discuss and decide on matters more frequently than allowed by the current five year cycle.

The issues that have divided us here will need to be addressed by our respective political leaders. One good opportunity to do so collectively will be provided by the UN Summit to be held in the fall. In this respect, it is important to realise that solutions to the problems of disarmament and non-proliferation already exist. What is needed is simply a matter of working

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harder on concerting the political will to implement them. Rather than looking back on where we have fallen short, we must look ahead to what we can and must accomplish.

In closing, Mr President, let me thank you for your untiring personal efforts as President of this Conference. Let me also commend the chairs of the Main Committees and subsidiary bodies for their dedicated work on our behalf. We would all have wished these efforts to be crowned with success, but your genuine commitment to the purposes and ideals of this Treaty was always an inspiration to us.