

Nuclear Non-Proliferation: The Security Context

by IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei (short version)

I am deeply grateful to receive this Honoris Causa Degree in Physics from such distinguished University as the University of Florence, a University where Enrico Fermi taught.

In reviewing the conference programme for the past two days, it became obvious to me that, by the time I spoke, you would have already covered most of the challenges relevant to nuclear proliferation. The historical context. The spread of nuclear technology and "know-how" in recent decades. The unfortunate current role of nuclear weapons in national security strategies and regional alliances. The need for leadership on disarmament. And the "Janus Face" of nuclear technology - the choice we have faced for more than half a century, as to whether nuclear science would be used for humanity's benefit, or for its self-destruction.

The question for me, naturally, was "what can I add to this discussion?".

I was reminded of what the Russian writer and poet, Boris Pasternak, once said: "In this era of world wars, in this atomic age, values have changed. We have learned that we are guests of existence, travelers between two stations. We must discover security within ourselves."

We urgently need to find a way for disarmament to be given the prominence and priority it deserves. Article VI of NPT requires parties to the Treaty to pursue negotiations in good faith "on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament". It is now 37 years since the Treaty entered into force. Should we not be well past the date when States party should be developing new nuclear weapons?

Yet that is precisely what is happening.

Virtually all nuclear-weapon States are extending and modernizing their nuclear weapon arsenals well into the 21st Century, with some making statements about the possible use of nuclear weapons, or the development of more "usable" nuclear weapons. Some have even started to reinterpret their legal obligation to nuclear disarmament under the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* - despite the "unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals" as recently as at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

It should be no surprise that many States have started to question the equity and fairness of the regime. Why, some ask, should the nuclear-weapon States be trusted to have nuclear weapons, but not others - and who is qualified to make that judgment? Why, others ask, is it okay for some to live under a nuclear threat, while others are protected by a "nuclear umbrella"?

What the weapon States consistently fail to take into account is the impact of their actions as role models. Whether they choose to continue to rely on nuclear weapons, as the centerpiece of their security strategy, or to abandon that reliance, their choice will undoubtedly influence the actions of others.

The good news, if there is good news, is that the current system is more and more widely recognized as unsustainable. Earlier this year, four American éminences grises, Henry Kissinger, William Perry, George Shultz and Sam Nunn - representing a wealth of experience in defence and security strategies - declared that reliance on nuclear weapons as a deterrent is becoming "increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective". They called for urgent international cooperation to move towards a world free from nuclear weapons.

Reaching this ultimate goal will take time. But there are number of concrete steps that could be initiated to send an immediate signal that nuclear weapon States take their treaty

obligations seriously. Deepcuts should be made in existing nuclear arsenals, with at least a substantial percentage of those cuts clearly stamped as irreversible. The current "hair-trigger" alert status of thousands of deployed nuclear weapons - which gives decision-makers only 30 minutes after a possible nuclear launch to decide whether to retaliate - should be downgraded. And multilateral disarmament efforts should be revived, by bringing into force the *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty* and initiating negotiation for a *Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty*. These steps would signal, once and for all, that the era of reliance on nuclear weapons is on its way out.

Conclusion: A New Security Paradigm

In conclusion, it is clear that a security strategy rooted in "Us versus Them" is no longer viable. Every country, irrespective of its ideology or worldview, will do what it takes to feel secure, including if necessary seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. This is, sadly, the stark reality. What makes this more dangerous is that, in an era of globalization and interdependence, the insecurity of some will inevitably lead to the insecurity of all. And with more countries acquiring such weapons, the odds of use of such a weapon - either intentionally or accidentally - become higher.

The prospects for progress will remain grim unless we have a complete change of mindset and begin to work on a new security paradigm. A security paradigm in which no country relies on nuclear weapons for its security. A system with effective mechanisms for resolving conflicts. A system in which longstanding regional conflicts, like those in the Middle East, are given the priority and attention they deserve. A system that is not perceived as a zero sum game, but rather a system that is equitable, inclusive and effective. And last but not least, a system that is centred on human security and the freedom and dignity of the individual. A world in which every individual lives in freedom and dignity is a world at peace.

Find the complete speech at
www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2007/ebsp2007n016.html