



The Threat posed by Weapons: Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Trade

By

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Antigua Sede de Senado de la República, Mexico City
17 February 2015

Excellencies

It is a pleasure to be here today. Thank you for having me and thank you for your interest in the critical issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

I would like to especially thank Senator Miguel Barbosa Huerta, President of the Senate, for his invitation to speak today and Senator Laura Angélica Rojas Hernández, Chair of the Committee of Foreign Affairs International Organizations; a tireless advocate for disarmament and non-proliferation.

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Since its inception, disarmament has been among the most persistent goals of the United Nations. The term appears twice in the Charter along with a separate goal called “the regulation of armaments”, often called conventional arms control.

Both remain our common goals today and together comprise what, in 1959, the General Assembly termed “general and complete disarmament under effective international control”, later declared as the UN’s “ultimate objective”.

The United Nations pursues this objective through the so-called ‘UN disarmament machinery’: the UN General Assembly’s First Committee, which meets annually to address disarmament issues, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community; the UN Disarmament Commission, composed of all UN member states and created in 1978 as a deliberative body to consider and make recommendations on disarmament issues; and the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, the only multilateral disarmament negotiating body.

The activities of these bodies are coordinated by my office – the Office of Disarmament Affairs – which works closely with the other multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation bodies: The International Atomic Energy Agency; the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; and the Preparatory Committee for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organisation.

Under the UN’s watch, the international community has negotiated treaties vital to global peace and security. These include the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear weapons (NPT), the Biological Weapons and Toxins Convention (BWC) – celebrating its 40th anniversary this year- and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

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Unfortunately, despite our continued exertions, these are not the best of times for disarmament and non-proliferation. Amid heightened tensions, the United States and the Russian Federation have lost their appetite for nuclear disarmament and even seem prepared to roll back the gains made since the end of the Cold War.

Multilateral approaches to disarmament have ground to a halt. The Conference on Disarmament has been gridlocked for nearly twenty years and essential disarmament treaties such as the CTBT or a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty have either yet to enter-into-force or failed to reach the negotiating table.

This May, the future of nuclear disarmament will be hotly debated at the NPT Review Conference. The NPT represents the fulcrum of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, but a lack of progress by Nuclear Weapon States to fulfil their disarmament commitments would expose dangerous cracks in this vital treaty.

The spirit of urgency and internationalism that characterised nuclear disarmament in the wake of the Cold War has dissipated.

Equally alarming, the unchecked spread of conventional weapons continues to pose a threat to the lives and livelihoods of much of the world. Non-state actors, in the form of separatist, insurgent or terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and ISIL have seized large territories, committed gross human rights violations and triggered humanitarian crises. They have been able to do so in large part because they are armed with weapons diverted – intentionally or otherwise – from the estimated 1.7 trillion dollar global arms trade.

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Despite this gloomy prognosis, 2014 did see some bright stars in the disarmament firmament and it is no coincidence that Mexico was deeply involved in these positive developments.

Indeed, Mexico has shown forthright and enduring leadership in driving forward the stalled debate on nuclear disarmament and has actively sought new ways to push multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including, most recently, as President of the Conference on Disarmament. Many have qualified Mexico's Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament as unconventional in style and approach but more dynamic than any CD Presidency in recent times.

Mexico has understood the need to break down silos and stereotypes between national positions, and its membership of the New Agenda Coalition and the Non Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, two very different cross-regional groups, is testament to this.

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One of the bright stars I mentioned earlier has been the growing support by States for the humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament – a movement seeking to demonstrate that the possession of nuclear weapons violates the principles of international humanitarian law.

This movement has continued to grow and inspire a new generation about the dangers and risks posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons. The humanitarian perspective has become a central counterpoint in the argument against those who view nuclear weapons as a rational response to renewed international tensions or as symbols of national prestige.

Here, again, Mexico has shown its leadership and commitment to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. In February of last year, Mexico hosted the second international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

The conference increased international understanding on the long-term consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and brought humanitarian considerations to the forefront of nuclear disarmament deliberations.

Mexico has also displayed a clear commitment to WMD non-proliferation. Your government has worked closely with the Office of Disarmament Affairs to implement its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1540 – which requires all States to adopt legislation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and establish appropriate domestic controls to ensure terrorists do not acquire weapons of mass destruction. Moreover, a Mexican expert currently serves at the Group of Experts of the 1540 Committee.

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The other bright star of 2014 was the entry-into-force of the historic Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) an incredible eighteen months after it was negotiated – light speed for multilateral treaties.

The ATT seeks to, inter alia, ensure that conventional weapons are not diverted to terrorist groups, insurgents, or criminal elements, and to bring transparency and accountability to the global arms trade through agreed standards, including by ensuring that arms exports are not going to be used to violate arms embargoes or to fuel conflict.

Mexico has been one of the principal supporters of the ATT. It was one of the first countries to ratify the treaty and your Government has stepped forward to lead the first Conference of States Parties, which will be held here in Mexico City later this year.

Mexico also continues to work closely with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), including through hosting workshops and capacity-building exercises for regional States, important elements for stemming the flow of illicit arms through the region.

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Given my audience here today and your interest in the subject matter, I'd like to conclude with a few words on the important role of parliamentarians in setting the disarmament agenda.

As Senators, you are well placed to bring effective and meaningful change to your country – and indeed to the world.

As representatives of the will of the people, you reflect diverse interests, and translate them into national laws.

Even more influential, is your role in ratifying international treaties and enacting legislation and appropriating funds to implement such treaties.

You also have an all-important role in holding your government accountable and ensuring that it abides by its international obligations.

This government has clearly demonstrated Mexico's enduring commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, as Senators, it is up to you to ensure it continues to do so.

Thank you.