



INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

6935 Laurel Avenue, Suite 201
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Phone: (301) 270-5500
FAX: (301) 270-3029
e-mail: ieer@ieer.org
<http://www.ieer.org>

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A Forward-Looking Agenda for the NPT

Arjun Makhijani
Institute for Energy and Environmental Research
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I will try to be brief and then we will have some discussion. Rebecca [Johnson] has covered many of the points in the forward-looking agenda that I wanted to cover. We wrote a letter to the delegates of the Review Conference, which was signed by organizations from 19 countries. The letter specifies many of the items in this forward-looking agenda that we would like the delegates to this conference to consider. Rebecca has mentioned many of them. I am going to highlight just a few things in that regard and raise a few questions.

We have had nuclear weapons since 1945 and more than one nuclear weapons state since 1949. The first two nuclear weapons countries, the United States and Russia, not only have threatened each other with annihilation, they have also threatened the rest of the world with annihilation. The five nuclear weapons states that did atmospheric testing have rained fallout on the people of the entire world. Every time you eat, you ingest carbon-14 from nuclear weapons, which is in the atmosphere in the form of carbon-14 dioxide. You are not spared if you are a vegetarian, because carbon-14 has been incorporated into all vegetable matter.

In 1970, when the Non-Proliferation Treaty went into effect, there was some hope that nuclear weapons states would pay some attention to the nuclear disarmament clause of this treaty, even though it was "woolly," as Rebecca [Johnson] has said. In 1996, the World Court said that Article VI means that nuclear disarmament has not only to be negotiated but also to be achieved "in all its aspects." That phrase implies a thorough approach - "in all its aspects" means you have to dismantle the whole infrastructure of nuclear weapons. The World Court actually gave a unanimous advisory opinion about this. It is not often that you get a unanimous opinion out of a very diverse body and on such a sensitive issue. There was even a United States representative on this World Court.

Of the five nuclear weapons states signatories to the NPT, only China, which is often criticized in other arenas, has recognized the legitimacy of the World Court decision. Four of the nuclear weapons countries, the United States, Britain, France and Russia, have refused to recognize the legitimacy of the World Court advisory opinion. The country that gave the world the idea of the rule of law, the United States, and has inspired so many people across centuries, across cultures

and across continents to believe that the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, should be equal before the law, does not recognize the World Court opinion. The United States has a constitution that makes international treaties the law of the land. Coincidentally, it is Article VI of the U.S. Constitution that makes international treaties the law of the United States and Article VI of the NPT that requires nuclear disarmament.

We have heard a lot of woolly declarations, as Rebecca [Johnson] has said, about the elimination of nuclear weapons, which is quite disheartening. Madeline Albright, the U.S. Secretary of State, said today in her speech to the NPT delegation that the United States is committed to nuclear disarmament. However, I live in Washington, read the papers in Washington and watch the debates in Washington, and I only hear nuclear weapons will be a part of the security doctrine of the United States for the foreseeable future, just like Britain and other countries. The NATO doctrine was adopted last year and, for reasons that I cannot fathom, nuclear weapons are seen as an essential part of NATO for threats that are unspecified. One hundred and fifty U.S. nuclear weapons are stationed in non-nuclear states of NATO, whose status under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty appears to be quite unclear, to say the least [in regard to Articles I and II].

It so happens that the five nuclear-weapons states parties to the NPT are also the five permanent members of the Security Council under the United Nations Charter most responsible for the military security of the world. If four of these five members of the Security Council cannot adopt or accept a World Court opinion on the NPT's meaning, what does this mean for the rule of law in the world? And I would put it to you that more than 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, we are at a crossroads: Are we going to move to nuclear chaos, in which the powerful will decide for unilateral security? Or are we going to achieve some [more equitable] kind of order? For myself, I do not believe unilateral security can be achieved in a world of nuclear weapons and nuclear materials that remain unaccounted for.

Is there going to be cheating under a regime of universal nuclear disarmament? Probably, or possibly. Is everybody going to behave perfectly within this order? No. I believe that the time for nuclear security guarantees, which were total guarantees, passed on July 16, 1945. I do not believe that there shall ever be a future that I can imagine in which we shall have zero risk from nuclear weapons. This is not possible. But I consider the situation today with five thousand nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert where we could all, as we sit here, be evaporated on any given day without notice and by accident to be completely and totally unacceptable and intolerable. I think that we are tolerating it only because the vast majority of people even in this country are completely unaware of this situation. I know this because I have done informal polling on this question as to the state of awareness of the American population about the dangers of accidental nuclear war for some time. The result is almost unanimous: people around the country, in all kinds of fields, do not know that Washington, DC was almost evaporated in 1995.

I think the first item on the collective agenda that I would like to see, and which we included in our letter to the NPT delegates, is that all five nuclear weapons states must accept as authoritative the decision of the unanimous advisory opinion of the World Court that they must arrive at complete nuclear disarmament in all its aspects. What are some of these minimal criteria

for progress? Rebecca [Johnson] has laid out some of them, but I want to stress a couple of them.

I think that so far as Russia and the United States are concerned, they have a special obligation, not only in regard to the large number of nuclear weapons they possess and as the longest participants and perpetrators of the nuclear arms race, but because these are the only two countries, so far as we know, who have weapons on hair-trigger alert. About 5000 between them. These weapons should be taken off hair-trigger alert. James Rubin at the State Department said yesterday or the day before, that we cannot expect complete nuclear disarmament overnight. Dr. Albright said more or less the same thing in her talk today to the NPT conference. However, there are certain things that we can do before the end of this NPT conference and I want to lay them out. All nuclear weapons can be taken off hair-trigger alert within a couple of days. There is precedent for this when President Bush recognized grave nuclear dangers. I think [former] President Bush is one of the unsung heroes of nuclear disarmament. I have often urged the disarmament community to recognize President Bush as one of the heroes, because in a moment of grave danger in 1991, he withdrew 10,000 U.S. nuclear weapons from the deployment - almost all of them tactical weapons. And he de-alerted hundreds of U.S. nuclear weapons, much of it took only a couple of days. A lock-out switch can be put on nuclear weapons so that the missile motors will not fire unless the switches physically removed. It only takes a couple of hours to do it. But it means that the weapons cannot be fired by accident or in a couple of minutes at a time of panic because there is something on the radar and no time to verify what it is. This is the main threat I think we face of all-out nuclear war. De-alerting can be done now. It can be accomplished and completed before the end of the NPT conference on May 19 [2000].

The undertaking to respect the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty can be given now. The undertaking not to design new nuclear weapons, which all five nuclear weapons states are doing, can be given now. And it should be unconditional and unequivocal. The undertaking not to threaten non-nuclear weapon states under any conditions with nuclear weapons can also be given now.

I want to say a couple of things about the ABM treaty, then we will open it up for questions. Why would the abrogation of the ABM treaty, at this stage, be a very destructive thing to do? The problems of nuclear weapons do not arise only because once used they would destroy everything. The problems of nuclear weapons lie in the instability of things, like nuclear deterrence, in the perceptions and the dangers of accidental war, and in the posture that each side perceives in the others. Everyone is reacting to what they think the other side will do. The United States and Russia both have first-use doctrines; they have explicitly adopted them. Their weapons have first-strike capability. This means that U.S. weapons launched on Russia can destroy their weapons on the ground. Russian weapons launched on the U.S. could destroy U.S. weapons on the ground, those that are land-based. However, most U.S. weapons cannot be destroyed by a surprise attack because most of the remaining U.S. weapons after START II will be undersea weapons in Trident submarines. They are generally regarded to be invulnerable. The installation of ballistic missile defenses looks to the other side as part of a first-strike system because ballistic missile defenses are more successful if you have first destroyed the nuclear weapons on the other side. "More successful" - the theoretical scheme of how nuclear weapons people think, not how I think. It is how nuclear war scenarios have been designed for the last 50 years. You can read the documents of the Rand Corporation or the Pentagon or the Joint Chiefs

of Staff. If there are national missile defenses, then the other side is going to regard them as part of a first strike capability. This cannot be avoided.

The Chinese today have 20 intercontinental missiles. If most of these are destroyed on the ground and there are 100 ground-based interceptors in the U.S., then the probability of China succeeding in deterring the United States from a first-strike will go from relatively high to very low, according to the calculations that the nuclear mathematicians will do. This is how they work. This means that China will definitely take counter measures. The nature of these counter measures may be a new arms race and they may be other things that are currently unknown to us. This cannot be avoided. Given the history of the United State and China, missile defenses will definitely going to look to China like part of a [U.S.] first-strike strategy. Whether that is the [U.S.] intention or not is irrelevant.

Unilateral nuclear defenses will not work. Nuclear weapons are not like guns. If two sides shoot guns, the side that shoots first wins and the other side is dead, according to the Western Hollywood films. However, nuclear weapons are not like that. If one side uses, everybody loses. This is the situation that we must take into account. I do not believe that the culture of the military has adjusted. We need to change the culture of thinking so that we can adapt to the reality of nuclear weapons. We, the people who signed the letter, believe that a great number of things can be done now. An explicit undertaking should be arrived at by all the parties to the NPT. Many people say that the outlook is gloomy, that people will not arrive at a consensus document that will mean anything. This may happen. If that looks to be the outcome, I would hope that the vast majority of non-nuclear weapon states, including those who are NATO allies and Japan and Germany, will see fit to call upon the nuclear weapons states to renounce first-use doctrines, to renounce hair-trigger alert, and to put the world on the road temporarily to less nuclear risk and in the long term to nuclear disarmament. There are things that can be done now and that we should do now.

Thank you.