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OPENING CEREMONY – KEYNOTE SPEECH

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When President Obama won the presidential race in the United States there were many world wide who believed a new era had begun. He expressed the hope for and belief in the future which many yearned for.

His first year has been difficult in the United States and abroad. An economic crisis struck in Europe and embraced the world. Internationally, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan preoccupied the United States and the continual crisis between Israel and Palestine proved to be as intractable and difficult as ever.

There was some criticism when President Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize. Some suggested it was premature and that the Prize should be awarded for achievement and not for hope. I do not agree with that view. International politics have gone through such a dark time, that to be in a world where hope prevails and where enlightenment governs the United States is of enormous importance for all of us. It is a change that justified the Nobel Prize.

Let me deal briefly with some of the major issues.

The economic crisis sprang from two causes: continued financial imbalances, the growth of debt in the United States and in many European countries but, more particularly, in the lack of prudential supervision of financial structures which are so important for economic stability. The non-bank financial sector in particular, played a major role in creating the circumstances for crisis. Globalisation was accompanied by increased freedom for major corporations in all sectors. Too many believed that corporations and banks would always behave responsibly and that the market would correct imbalances and prudential supervisions should be minimized. It was a case of an excess of freedom that led to irresponsibility and serious breakdown.

Earlier meetings of the InterAction Council, especially in 2008 and earlier years, have pointed to the extreme dangers of an inadequately monitored and regulated international financial system.

While one may argue about specific measures, major countries responded to this crisis in the only way possible. They returned to Keynesian economics to stop total and worldwide collapse. A collapse that would have seen unemployment reach 20-25%. This was a major domestic challenge which President Obama met, as did other leaders worldwide.

Unification of Europe proceeded with remarkable success. The new Constitution was finally accepted. It is an advance to see Europe united but to believe that 27 countries can develop a concerted defence or foreign policy is naïve. I suspect it will be many years before the European Union can develop a collaborative and effective foreign policy. It is clear that foreign policies of larger countries will continue to act independently of the European Union.

Tensions arose between the new Europe and Russia, significantly because of attempts to push Ukraine and Georgia into membership of NATO. From afar, such moves seem provocative on the part of the European Union. Ask yourselves how the United States would respond if European states sought to establish a defence alliance in the western hemisphere with Mexico and Brazil. There has been a pull back from that excess.

Relations between the United States and Russia have advanced. Only a few weeks ago, both countries reached an agreement for the first nuclear weapons reduction treaty since 1991. The landmark treaty will include significant reductions in both the number of deployed nuclear weapons as well as the number of nuclear-delivery systems. This is an important and vital first step that had to take place if any progress is to be made on the abolition of nuclear weapons – a prime objective of this meeting. President Obama and President Medvedev both agreed that it is important to work for a world free of nuclear weapons. We must not lose the opportunity that creates. I will come to that later in the speech.

It is to be hoped that this United States/Russian agreement will lead to further strategic cooperation between these two powers.

International terrorism remains a continuing threat in many countries and absorbs massive resources in seeking to protect civilian communities. We should have learnt that terrorism will not be overcome by military arms alone. Other policies are critical.

When the Normans first invaded England in the 11th century, they killed everyone in the first villages they came across. They wanted a compliant countryside. Those terrorist acts achieved it.

While terrorism often appears mindless, barbaric and inhumane to people worldwide, there are reasons for terrorism and, unless those reasons are understood, overcoming today's terrorism will be unlikely. It would be difficult if not impossible to change the mind of religious fundamentalists but it should be possible to pursue policies that make it very hard, if not impossible for them to gain recruits for their cause.

We must seek to understand how other people look at issues. The Coalition of the Willing's invasion of Iraq made recruiting for Al Qaeda so much easier. The West is seen to be imposing its idea of government on another country. In the conduct of that war, many civilians have been killed and the West has not been immune from its own barbarities.

The Iraq Inquiry in the United Kingdom is giving a wider audience an insight into the motivations of the British Government and of its Prime Minister in particular. The principles alleged to be followed in the lead-up to that war were ones that cannot lead and will not lead to international peace. It clearly usurped the authority of the United Nations. Intelligence was wrong, inaccurate and, in many cases, known to be false.

The idea that Saddam Hussein could have weapons of mass destruction released over London within 45 minutes was always a total absurdity. At the time he did not have the weapons. If there was any doubt about that, there was no doubt that intelligence services knew he did not have the missile capability to reach any major city in Europe. The lie was left hanging to justify war.

If people in the west want to establish a world governed by law, major countries are going to have to learn to live by international rules. This is one of the greatest challenges in front of us. General rules are made but then the great and the powerful are prepared to break them if they believe it to be in their national interest. Great powers have been prepared to allow those they regarded as their friends also to break the rules. There will be no effective law and no lasting peace unless the great and powerful are prepared to accept international law, properly made.

While the end gain in Iraq may now be discernible, the shape of that end is still problematic. The Coalition is virtually committed to withdrawal but the outcome could be heightened tension, greater terrorist incidents and breakdown between the different religious factions.

Afghanistan and Pakistan present the West and, because she is the undisputed world leader, the United States, with agonising choices.

Pakistan itself is an insecure country where democracy has repeatedly been interrupted by military intervention. Internal stability is fragile. The war in Afghanistan has had adverse consequences for Pakistan. Those involved in Afghanistan need to be careful the Taliban influence does not grow in Pakistan, a country with a ready-made nuclear arsenal. Further instability in Pakistan would be much more serious for regional peace than anything that has so far occurred in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan does not proceed well. The decision to place a larger number of troops in Afghanistan was clearly one undertaken with great difficulty. I suspect it was the only option available to President Obama, having regard to domestic and international political realities. But the statements of generals in charge of operation in Afghanistan remind me too sharply of the statements of generals over Vietnam who also said “We need a change of strategy, we need more troops and we will guarantee victory.”

If there can be negotiations with the Taliban, if they can be weened from Al Qaeda and accept a role in rebuilding Afghanistan, the way to end the war may unfold. From all reports sporadic talks have taken place pointing to that outcome but if 543,482(April 1968 peak) American troops backed by 1,500,000 South Vietnamese troops could not win in Vietnam, can 137,000 foreign troops succeed in Afghanistan. Certainly military technology has advanced massively but the disparity between Vietcong and official forces was at that time believed to be great and overwhelming. The technological gap is not a new advantage.

The lesson from Afghanistan may finally be that a western led army is unable to impose a government or a form of government on a country whose traditions, whose people, whose history and culture is so vastly different. Every time a civilian is killed as part of collateral damage, that civilian has relatives and friends who become enemies of the occupation forces. It is worth remembering that over many centuries, occupying forces have never gained dominance over Afghanistan.

While there is no question concerning the legality of the operations in Afghanistan, in contrast to Iraq, the wisdom of conducting full-scale military operations is very much in doubt.

The current phase of international terrorism is influenced by and, on some interpretations, has its origins in the problems between Israel and Palestine. Talks leading to a two-state solution have made no progress. Reviving talks between Israel and the Fattah government on the West Bank with President Mahmoud Abbas, has not been possible.

There are two very obvious reasons for failure. The continued expansion of settlements on the West Bank and East Jerusalem make negotiation of a two-state solution virtually impossible. Clearly Palestinians would accept the 1967 boundaries but Israel will not. Many countries have supported United Nations resolutions opposing any expansion of Israeli settlements but when it comes to doing something about it, they are silent. President Abbas has now said he will not enter talks unless there is an absolute freeze on all expansion activity. He has merit in that position but Israel will not abide it and offers only a partial restriction.

President Obama has tried more than any previous American President to prevent the expansion of settlements and to get movement on this issue. It seems he has been left to carry that burden alone and many countries that could help to influence Israel have been silent, certainly they haven't entered the public lists to add their weight to that of President Obama. It is time they did and they should not be deterred by interest groups in their own countries.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's own actions cast doubt on his willingness to pursue a two-state solution. He would certainly want a state possessing less than full-state rights. How could negotiations be possible with an Israeli government holding such an attitude?

More recent actions of the Israeli government concerning the expansion of settlements in east Jerusalem make it all the more important for those countries which can help to influence the outcome to enter the list. Indeed, the way the latest expansion of settlements has been handled by Israel, leads one legitimately to draw a conclusion that there are many people in Israel who still do not accept a 2-state solution and who believe that if the current situation persists, they can, de facto, take more and more of that which would be regarded as Palestinian land.

But another issue which has prevented progress is the division between the Palestinians themselves, a division which they must overcome. Many blame Hamas for its policies and its non-recognition of Israel but too many have forgotten that Hamas won a legitimate election. Instead of sitting down and talking with Hamas leaders, Western countries sought to isolate Hamas and refused even to talk with them. It seems there has been a coalition of some countries in the West, President Abbas and Israel all combining to seek to destroy Hamas for their separate and differing reasons. Such policies have clearly failed and, in addition to the settlement issue in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, have been sufficient to prevent any progress towards a two-state solution. There is no reason to believe that Hamas' support on the ground has been significantly diminished by these policies. The West should understand

that it cannot promote a democratic process as it did in Palestine and then deny the outcome of that process, which is precisely what it did. The West appeared to support democracy only if it gave the solution the West wanted. That is not democracy.

In too many parts of what would be a Palestinian state, Fattah has been regarded as corrupt and self-serving. That has not changed. Hamas has been closer to the people and, when it was tested, had significant electoral support.

While Hamas' non-recognition of Israel is unacceptable to most countries, the purpose of diplomacy should have been to get a commitment from Hamas that on the day that inviolate boundaries of a Palestinian state are accepted, they will then fully recognise the State of Israel. The two would march together. When Palestinians see the boundaries of a possible Palestinian state diminishing week by week through direct Israeli action, is it any wonder that one Palestinian faction holds out against recognition of Israel?

These issues need to be open to debate without leading to charges of anti-Semitism. The Holocaust was too long ago and, while the world must make sure that such horrific events can never happen again and while its impact on the Jewish people will prevail maybe for all generations, the fact that the horror of the Holocaust occurred should no longer be used to stifle debate internationally on issues that are hotly debated within Israel itself.

In this area, countries like my own, like major countries in Europe, have abdicated responsibility and policies of even handedness between Israel and Palestine. Until they again join in working for a just peace, this fundamental cause of modern terrorism will remain as an abscess on the body politic.

Speaking from Japan, one must also be in particular concerned by problems in the Korean peninsula. How much of the attitudes of North Korea is a legacy of the Cold War, how much of it is a response to earlier US threats concerning regime change? Threatening regime change is not a good way to achieve agreement or to lead to peace. In such circumstances, governments will do what they believe will best protect their own interests. It would not be surprising if that question alone was enough to cause North Korea to seek nuclear weapons.

The search for a fully diplomatic solution to the problems on the peninsula are clearly of enormous concern to Japan and to the region. While the Group of Six needs to be very much involved, it may well be time for direct talks between Korea and the United States.

These issues are all part of the international mosaic and they are of enormous importance and ones which the United States administration, in cooperation now with the rest of the world, must deal with.

There are other major problems which I can only mention in passing: the question of poverty, political instability and suppression in many parts of Africa, together with political instability in South America and the major tragedy in Haiti. I recognise, however, to make substantive remarks on all of these issues would test your patience too far.

In today's world there are two great existential challenges looming over all others. Firstly, the question of climate change. Whatever happened in Copenhagen is far short of what is required. Too many countries are refusing to pay any price for changes that must be consummated if the world environment is to be safeguarded. The other great challenge concerns nuclear weapons and it is this subject with which our meeting in Hiroshima is particularly concerned.

It is 65 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed with what by today's standards would be small 'tactical' nuclear weapons. Even though the global nuclear arsenal is now about one third the size of its peak in 1986, yet this still amounts to the explosive power of over 330,000 Hiroshima-size bombs. Just one Hiroshima-sized bomb detonated over a modern highly populated city could cause up to three quarters of a million immediate deaths, radiation deaths in the hundreds of thousands, and millions exposed to levels of radiation warranting protective action such as evacuation.

The significance of this meeting being held in Hiroshima is not lost on any of us. I hope very much that the Council will make a very strong affirmation concerning the need to reach a zero option for nuclear weapons at the earliest possible opportunity. It won't happen in months and maybe not in a decade but in twenty years we could live in a world free of nuclear weapons. It can be done without jeopardising any country's defence, without placing any country at risk – and we, and the planet, would be so much more secure.

The nuclear crisis in which we find ourselves is profound and we cannot afford to be inattentive. Let us review some of the key elements of this crisis:

First, nuclear materials, technology and expertise are increasingly widespread and accessible. If one of the most impoverished, isolated and technically backward countries, North Korea, is able to develop nuclear weapons using essentially 1950s technology, any government can.

Second, smuggling of fissile materials has been extensive and for years the AQ Khan black market network, active in over 30 countries, peddled centrifuges for enriching uranium and Chinese designs for nuclear weapons suitable for missiles, the latter fitting on a single CD. North Korea is reported to have sold nuclear technology and weapons know-how around the world, including to Syria and Burma.

Third, nine countries have nuclear weapons; and nuclear weapons programs have progressed to varying degrees in several more before they were abandoned (such as Libya) or destroyed (such as Iraq).

Fourth, more than 40 countries have the nuclear technology to produce nuclear weapons within a matter of months if they so chose, by either enriching uranium further from reactor to weapons grade, or extracting plutonium from used nuclear reactor fuel.

Fifth, the non-proliferation regime is terribly inadequate in terms of scope, mandate, application and resources. It has repeatedly failed to prevent or detect nuclear weapons programs, not only in the 3 states always outside the NPT, but also in South Africa, Iraq, Libya and North Korea.

Sixth, as of 15 Dec 2009, of the 189 states party to the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, 22 still did not have comprehensive safeguards agreements with the IAEA in force, and 95 did not have in force an Additional Protocol, the strengthened provisions introduced in 1997 after the discovery of Iraq's well-advanced nuclear weapons program.

Finally, quite apart from states, international terrorists actively seek nuclear weapons, and could buy or steal existing weapons or fissile material. It is the widespread knowledge of nuclear technology, the ease with which that knowledge can be obtained that make the current situation so precarious.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the danger today is even greater than during the Cold War because then, nuclear technology was more limited, proliferation had not proceeded so far, and the major players, as events have proved, were determined to avoid nuclear conflict. The knowledge, expertise and the weapons were in relatively few hands. That has changed. More countries have nuclear weapons, a greater number have potential to develop them. The danger of world terrorism is real and the possibility that a regional nuclear conflict or a terrorists organised incident involving nuclear weapons may occur is greater than ever before. The processes of proliferation and the dangers of nuclear terrorism will grow. The current non-proliferation regime has broken down and now the only safe path for all of us is to work for and achieve the zero option.

There are three ways in which countries like Japan, my own, and other non nuclear-armed members of nuclear alliances such as NATO can contribute to this objective. First, by planning, in the near future, for security arrangements in which nuclear weapons have no place. Second, countries should be working together to define a comprehensive treaty which would underpin, verify and sustain the abolition of nuclear weapons. And third, the safeguards and procedures to make sure that nuclear materials cannot be diverted from civil to military use need to be greatly strengthened and reinforced. All fissile materials – whether designated as military or civilian - must either be eliminated or brought under international control.

Japan has recently made a significant step, by making clear that its military relationship with the United States should not stand in the way of progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. On the way to achieving this goal, the government of Japan favours prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-armed NPT member states, with the sole purpose of nuclear weapons being to deter their use by others. This is a welcome first step and is to be applauded because all countries have a role to play and a responsibility to help create a nuclear weapons free world.

There has also been welcome realisation on the part of many others that abolishing nuclear weapons is necessary, urgent and feasible. In 2007 George Schultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn helped create the political space for the US President to embrace the goal of abolition. Since then, support groups from a number of countries, including Britain, France, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Australia have reinforced this momentum. In Japan there has also been considerable support for the zero option. So far, however, there has been little action and the gulf between rhetoric and reality remains huge.

There are also contradictions between the statements of many leaders and the official policy of their governments. Gordon Brown commits repeatedly to work to “achieve a world that is free from nuclear weapons”, while his government’s policy is still to build new submarines to carry Trident nuclear missiles to 2050 and beyond. The Australian Government has called for a roadmap ultimately leading to the abolition of nuclear weapons and yet the Defence White paper published last year still speaks of an ‘extended nuclear deterrence for decades hence.

United States leadership is vital if we are to achieve a safer future. President Obama has overcome considerable obstacles to change America’s nuclear posture. He has recognised that the greatest threat to global security is now

nuclear terrorism by extremists and nuclear proliferation to an increasing number of states. He has also accepted that American national security and fulfilment of allied obligations can be increasingly fulfilled by conventional military capabilities.

The President has announced that, for the first time, preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism is top of America's nuclear agenda. 47 nations meeting in the United States have taken steps to secure vulnerable nuclear materials over the next four years. More important, the United States has declared it will not use or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against non nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with that Treaty.

He has also stated that the United States will not conduct nuclear testing and will seek ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and that the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads or pursue new military capabilities in nuclear weapons.

Taken together, these are significant steps. They are a remarkable change from America's earlier nuclear postures. One would expect to see these changes reflected in the direction of United States Defense spending over coming years. His military budget for 2011 requested before these decisions were taken, represents a staggering \$708 billion. That includes 13.4% increase in funds for the National Nuclear Security Agency. These figures indicate the size of the task remaining before the United States President.

It also underlines the need for governments around the world, who believe in a nuclear weapons-free world, to do what is within their power to increase the momentum towards the zero option.

I am glad therefore to see that a motion supported by all parties passed in the German Bundestag as recently as 26 March. That motion establishes objectives and sets out a strategy. The Bundestag has urged a reduction in the role of nuclear weapons in the NATO strategy and the promotion of nuclear and conventional disarmament. This is an example that should be followed by all states in alliance with a nuclear power.

Perhaps the most important question before us is to find effective ways of building momentum towards a treaty regime that will work verifiably to dismantle nuclear weapons and delivery systems, secure fissile materials, implement effective global safeguards and monitoring, and dismantle and clean up the vast radioactive and toxic legacy of nuclear weapons production and testing?

On the one hand it is easy to be pessimistic. While overall nuclear weapon numbers have declined from close to 70,000 in 1986 to close to 23,000 today, so bloated are these arsenals that the danger to global health, security and survival remains essentially undiminished. The risk of use of nuclear weapons has not gone away since the end of the Cold War; it has grown. Any use of nuclear weapons would pose very real and unstoppable dangers of escalation, including in unpredictable directions.

In addition, for the past 15 odd years, nuclear disarmament has been stalled. For the first time, a major nuclear arms control treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, was abandoned. The only new nuclear weapons agreement over this period, the Moscow or SORT agreement, is not verified, does not involve warhead dismantling, and expires at the same time the reductions envisaged are due to be implemented. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has produced nothing since it negotiated the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1996, which is yet to enter into force; and nuclear tests continue in North Korea, which has walked away from the NPT, with little consequence.

On the other hand there is much that can be done and, in the first instance, I return to an enduring theme, and that is the equitable and consistent application of the rule of law because double standards in relation to nuclear weapons proliferation are breathtaking and fuel the problem.

While Israel's substantial nuclear arsenal arouses virtually no international sanction and they continue refuse to allow the IAEA to inspect their facilities, the issues and lack of transparency around Iran's nuclear program continue to be antagonistic. At the same time many states are scaling up ostensibly civilian nuclear programs and this always entails the potential for proliferation.

In 1974, India detonated a plutonium bomb, violating agreements to use, only for peaceful purposes, nuclear fuel supplied by the US in a heavy water reactor provided by Canada. This led to the establishment of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), aiming to prevent such diversion in the future. Yet in 2008 the 45 members of the NSG approved a nuclear deal between the US and India which effectively rewards India's initiation of the nuclear arms race in South Asia and strikes a body blow at the already crumbling NPT. The deal trashes a founding principle of the NPT. The sharing of nuclear technology should be limited to non-nuclear weapon states that have foresworn nuclear weapons by joining the treaty. India has gained access to nuclear technology and materials which is arguably more generous than if it were a compliant member of the NPT.

India's capacity to divert nuclear materials from civilian to military purposes had been made much easier because it can designate which facilities are civilian and subject to safeguards. However, it has not committed to make safeguards on civilian facilities or materials permanent or unconditional. A number of power reactors will not, therefore, be covered by safeguards. It is also worth noting that India have made

- no binding nuclear disarmament commitments,
- has not committed to stop nuclear tests,
- has not signed or ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty,
- and it has not stopped production of highly enriched uranium or plutonium for weapons purposes.

India has not committed to full safeguards and as a consequence of the arrangements with the United States and subsequently also France and Russia, will clearly be able to divert more of its own uranium to weapons purposes.

Not surprising is the response by Pakistan, which is now building two new plutonium production reactors, and expanding its capacity to produce highly enriched uranium. When, after 13 years of paralysis, the Conference on Disarmament finally agreed last year to begin negotiations on a treaty limiting production of fissile materials, Pakistan and China prevented any substantive work. In January Pakistan ruled out joining such a treaty because of nuclear disparity with India. The possibility that some of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal could fall into the hands of the Taliban is a real and urgent concern.

Establishing an open, transparent, effective non-proliferation regime is an essential measure on the road to zero nuclear weapons if we want the world to be a safer place. These needs are reinforced by scientific evidence from state of the art climate models which indicate that even a limited regional war in South Asia, for example, involving less than 1% of the weapons and less than one half of 1% of the explosive power of the world's current nuclear arsenal would kill tens of millions immediately and cause severe climatic consequences which would persist for a decade or more. These would result in global starvation on a scale never seen before.

There is no question that an inequitable, increasingly population, resource and climate-stressed world is an ever more dangerous place for nuclear weapons. Preventing any use of such weapons and establishing an irreversible process that will get us to, and keep us at zero are imperative for the security of every current and future person.

The question before us is how best to seize the current opportunity to abolish nuclear weapons? How best to establish a comprehensive, verifiable, irreversible, universal process towards zero nuclear weapons, linking all the

interrelated aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation into an integrated package; applying consistent standards and binding rules for all?

The START and INF treaties have already shown that it is feasible for nuclear weapons to be verifiably reduced and classes of weapons to be eliminated. The experience of other inhumane weapons which have been or are being abolished – from dum dum bullets way back in 1899, through biological and chemical weapons, to landmines and cluster munitions most recently – has been that a comprehensive treaty is required.

The joint steps taken by Japan and Australia to establish a roadmap for the substantial reduction of nuclear weapons are positive steps towards these objectives.

In October 2008 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon proposed a five-point plan linking nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. He circulated a model nuclear weapons convention to all UN members suggesting it offered a “good point of departure” for achieving total nuclear disarmament.

There can be no doubt that a comprehensive treaty architecture will be needed to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons and end production of fissile material which could be used for weapons and to secure and where possible eliminate existing stocks. We should all be asking ourselves what we can do and what all governments might do to advance this objective.

In just over 2 weeks the 5 yearly Review Conference of the 189 states party to the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty takes place in New York. This is a crucial meeting. If the nuclear weapon states come to the conference having delivered little further on disarmament, and agreement is not reached on substantial disarmament and non-proliferation measures, it can be expected that a tipping point of escalating nuclear proliferation may be crossed.

The Australian-Japanese sponsored International Commission on Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament has made useful recommendations on a package of measures for the Review Conference. The report and recommendations from the High Level Expert Meeting a few days ago will provide more detailed proposals for your consideration, but there are some steps that can be clearly defined:

- There is a need for a comprehensive nuclear abolition treaty such as a nuclear weapons convention, as outlined by the UN Secretary General. The nuclear weapon states should agree and state that they would not be the first to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against each other, and

- All nuclear weapons should be taken off high level alert, and not deployed outside the territory of possessor state;
- The nuclear weapon states should declare that they will not first design, develop, or produce new nuclear warheads or modify existing warheads to create new military capabilities, or second, increase their nuclear arsenals;
- In the recently signed New START Treaty, Russia and the United States have committed to modest but verifiable and binding reductions in deployed nuclear weapons. Both countries should be commended for this significant step. However, the momentum to nuclear disarmament should be further developed and we must hope that the next Treaty will cover all nuclear warheads, both tactical and strategic, as a significant step on the road to abolition.

There are many other steps that can and should be taken. The upcoming Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference comes at a crucial time and I hope the work of this Council, and its long-standing support for the abolition of nuclear weapons – as well as the communiqué of this particular conference, will provide further momentum to that objective.

We stand at a historic moment in world affairs. We can take steps which will contribute to security and to peace and to the advancement of human kind, or we can abdicate our responsibilities and allow the world to slip into chaos.

We need to understand the challenge for humankind. For the first time in this world we have the capacity to destroy civilisation and the planet as we know it. This could come first by continued argument and inaction over climate change and refusal to recognise the role that our own development has in that equation. Second, by a nuclear conflict with most disastrous and terrible consequences. It makes the challenge in front of today's leaders more urgent and more important. President Obama has shown that he understands this critical necessity. Where are other leaders rallying to his support, either in his own country or worldwide?

I remain an optimist, and am hopeful that peoples and their governments around the world will respond to this most urgent need.