

## ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT:

### A CHANCE FOR PROGRESS

Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, Senator Gareth Evans, to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, Kyoto, 27 May 1991.

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This United Nations' Conference on disarmament comes at an important time in global affairs and Japan is much to be congratulated for hosting it. After two years of unprecedented global transformation, it is the right time for us to be evaluating carefully the vastly changed international security environment in which we now operate; it is the right time to be assessing the opportunities for progress in arms control thus opened up as well as the obstacles which still lie ahead; and it is the right time to be defining the tasks which lie ahead for our arms control and disarmament negotiators.

The Australian Government very much appreciates Japan's contribution to global security through the arms control and disarmament policies outlined by Prime Minister Kaifu this morning. As will become clear in the course of my speech, we fully endorse Japan's emphasis on the need to make early progress in the negotiation and refinement of global multilateral instruments to control or eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and we strongly support the idea that the United Nations should play a key role in achieving transparency in conventional arms transfers. We look forward to working in close cooperation with Japan on this shared agenda. We have also been impressed by the Japanese Government's announcement that it intends to relate provision of its overseas development assistance to the arms acquisition and supply policies of potential recipients: this is a step of great importance, which clearly shows this country's serious intention to achieve practical progress in areas where it can exercise strong influence.

#### International Security Environment

Arms control and disarmament negotiations do not of course take place in a void. Negotiators do not hammer out agreements in an ethereal atmosphere divorced from the real world. Progress in disarmament, as in all issues on our international agenda, is heavily influenced by the prevailing political attitudes and the current and prospective international security climate. And in this respect the current climate is encouraging. For all the uncertainties which still exist about the future course of political development in the Soviet Union, it is difficult to believe that there will now be a reversion to ideological confrontation between the superpowers. The world does seem to have moved irrevocably beyond its division into two utterly antagonistic camps. We can now contemplate the

prospect of a greater degree of international cooperation to address common problems.

This is not to deny that the strategic relationship between the superpowers remains the central defining characteristic of global security. Nor is it to deny the existence of the 50,000 nuclear warheads which the two superpowers possess between them, and the pressing need for bilateral action to dramatically reduce those arsenals. A start has been made on limiting arms held or deployed by the superpowers: there has been progress on conventional forces in Europe, chemical weapons, and the strategic arms reduction talks to add to the achievement of the earlier INF agreement. And there has been important progress in the acceptance of verification, not only as a means of ensuring compliance with particular agreements, but as a way of building confidence more generally about the motives and intentions of each negotiating partner.

These achievements, flowing essentially from negotiations between the superpowers, are encouraging and welcome, but their impact has been felt principally in Europe. The crisis in the Gulf recalled our attention to the dangers of arms build-ups in regions other than Europe, and of the threat to the international security framework which could be presented by a regionally powerful country prepared to flout the principles of international law and the UN Charter. It reminded us that the decline of East-West tension would not necessarily bring with it the eradication of regional tensions, that a new volatility could very well come to characterise the post-Cold War security order. Saddam Hussein certainly interpreted the loosening of superpower influence as removing a troublesome constraint on the realisation of his ambitions. Mistaken though Iraq was in underestimating the resolve of the international community to reverse aggression, it is clear that in future, as superpower presence lessens, regionally influential countries will have a greater relative impact on international security. At the same time, economic development - uneven as it might be - will provide more of the means for the second and third rank of countries behind the superpowers to supply themselves with arms.

In the Gulf crisis, the international community was faced with more than a military crisis. Certainly the first imperative was to reverse the results of Saddam Hussein's aggression; and that was achieved, with United States leadership and with the cooperation of the Permanent Five members of the Security Council, using the collective security system of the United Nations. But as the continuing tension in the Middle East so clearly reveals, the challenges were - and are - wider than the successful prosecution of the military campaign.

It will be essential to find solutions for a second set of issues, more political in nature than military, that have been the underlying and long-standing causes of tension in the Middle East: in particular the question of secure and recognised borders for Israel, and a just future for the Palestinian people. In this context, we applaud the remarkable efforts by Secretary of State Baker to bridge the gaps which have divided the parties to the Arab/Israeli dispute for more than forty years, and call on all sides to show flexibility and receptivity to Secretary Baker's mediation.

A third imperative in the Middle East is to achieve a more even pattern of economic development through a fairer distribution of the region's resources. The vast wealth which flows from oil is the most obvious resource at issue, and increasingly the countries of the region are focussing attention on the sine qua non of all human development: water.

The fourth and final component of a comprehensive approach to regional security in the Middle East is the subject matter of this Conference: the need to achieve major measures of arms control and disarmament.

I have mentioned the post-Gulf Middle East situation in detail not just because it remains so topical, but because the Middle East is a graphic illustration of the fact that security is multidimensional. We simply cannot expect lasting and comprehensive security in any sensitive region of the world unless progress is achieved across a wide front of interlocking political, economic, and military issues. Commitments on arms control are a mirage without progress on the underlying divisive political concerns; and cooperative approaches are unlikely to be productive where economic development is hostage to ingrained enmities and an acutely uneven distribution of resources.

No nation's security can these day be guaranteed by military capabilities alone. It must be supported by building layers of connective tissue between states - developing interdependence at a number of different levels, and making them appreciate that their security is best built not against their neighbours but with them.

So we cannot contemplate a more stable global security environment without working to resolve the political differences which continue to divide countries, and without working to underpin opportunities for solid economic development. Equally, it is difficult to imagine any of our efforts to achieve greater security yielding success in a world where weapons proliferate, arms stocks grow, and human ingenuity is put to use to invent ever more destructive means of killing. And it is to that essential component of security - arms control and disarmament - that I now turn in a little more detail.

### The Arms Control and Disarmament Agenda

Iraq's threat to use nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and its indiscriminate use of ballistic missiles, has underlined the urgent need to move forward on measures to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of missiles. As a spur to action, we need to remind ourselves of a concern which was uppermost in our minds during the Gulf crisis. If Iraq had used chemical or biological weapons, or indeed if it had waited until it had developed nuclear weapons before it challenged the international community, the stakes would have been much higher and the threat to global security even more acute. The Gulf crisis reminds us that we can not afford to wait for arms control arrangements to

fall into place; for if we wait, the onward march of technology and the spread of weaponry will outstrip our non-proliferation work. We need to reverse that calculus, and strive now to extend and strengthen the package of arms control and disarmament arrangements.

An important part of this package of arrangements is that suppliers act responsibly and control stringently their exports of sensitive materials and technologies, while protecting legitimate trade and respecting the access of developing countries to peaceful uses of technologies. But the only long term way of controlling and eliminating weapons lies in effective global multilateral agreements drawing on the assent and cooperation of the entire international community.

There is an urgent need for action in all three categories of weapons of mass destruction - nuclear, chemical and biological. And there is an equally urgent need for new action in the areas of missile technology and conventional weapons as well. I would like to say something about all these areas in turn.

Chemical Weapons. The early conclusion of a Chemical Weapons Convention outlawing the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, retention and transfer of chemical weapons, and establishing an elaborate mechanism for verifying compliance, is a practical objective for the post-Gulf war period. Negotiators have made progress in Geneva - although it has taken many years for those negotiations to gain real momentum - but a number of obstacles remain, principally with verification. The re-emergence of public awareness and concern about the possible use of chemical weapons during the Gulf crisis gives us a chance to revitalise and impart a new sense of urgency to the negotiations. The sense that the end-game is imminent has resulted in a refinement of positions and a sharpening of focus.

If ever the time was right for the conclusion of this long-sought convention, that time is now. The need is fresh in everybody's mind, the political environment is favourable, and much of the groundwork has been done. All that is now needed is that extra element of creativity and political will to produce the resolution of the final issues. I warmly welcome the recent major announcement by President Bush on new elements in the United States' approach to the Convention, including the withdrawal of a claimed right to retaliate and to retain a residual stockpile. I believe the United States initiative sets out a reasonable and achievable timetable, and will make a very substantial and especially timely contribution to what is now the very real prospect for the conclusion of the Treaty.

To achieve the necessary final impetus I believe, however, that there is a need to bring to bear the experience and authority which can only be provided by ministers. I think that an early meeting of the Conference on Disarmament at ministerial level to resolve outstanding issues will be necessary, and I have written to other Foreign Ministers of CD member countries to urge consideration of such a step. I am very gratified by Japan's

support for such a meeting. Obviously, a ministerial meeting must be part of a carefully planned process, and there will manifestly be a need for detailed preparation using existing negotiating channels if the presence of ministers in Geneva is to be properly utilised.

It is not enough to negotiate an agreement in Geneva and then open it for adherence. If we want a world free of chemical weapons we have to ensure that the overwhelming majority of countries sign it and adhere to its provisions. Australia has been active in creating the further conditions for an effective agreement with wide adherence. In 1989 we held in Canberra an international Government-Industry Conference on Chemical Weapons to inform and persuade that sector of our economies - the chemical industry - whose cooperation will be vital in the effective implementation of a convention.

And we have launched a regional initiative among countries of the Asia Pacific, first to brief them on what will be necessary to implement the provisions of the Convention, and second, to gain solid regional consensus and support for the global Convention. We consider that initiative to be a model which other regions might also like to consider, and we welcome the initiatives by the governments of Nigeria and Venezuela to conduct similar exercises in regional consensus-building. The Government of Iran has just agreed to receive an Australian delegation to discuss our regional initiative and related CW matters, and it is to be hoped that something can grow from this in the Middle East context.

Regional initiatives of the kind Australia has set in train are designed to do more than deliver a certain number of positive votes for the Convention - although that would of course be an important achievement. They are an attempt to ensure that when the Convention is in place, all regional countries will see it as being in their interests to adhere together. The very real danger with this sort of agreement is that no one country will be prepared to adhere if all other countries in its region do not do likewise simultaneously. The prospect then is that none adheres. Our regional initiative is a way of overcoming that double bind: it will have the effect, we hope, of building the trust and confidence necessary to ensure comprehensive adherence.

Australia's overwhelming priority is to achieve the early conclusion and implementation of a global convention. In the meantime, we have been concerned to work through the group of chemical producing countries known as the Australia Group to prevent the proliferation of material and technology which is needed for the manufacture of chemical weapons. In parallel with that effort, we have been concerned to ensure that there are no impediments to legitimate trade in chemicals and chemical technology, and to engage in closer dialogue and information sharing with other chemical producers not members of the Group to assist them in ensuring that they do not inadvertently contribute to the spread of chemical weapons.

Nuclear Weapons. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a fundamental cornerstone of arms control, and has served the security, trade and nuclear cooperation interests of the global community very well. Yet here too there is no cause for complacency. We need to examine ways to strengthen the commitment of the international community to the NPT and the operation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system.

In Australia's view, we should be working now to build support for indefinite extension of the NPT at the extension conference in 1995. At the same time, we need to continue our efforts to persuade non-members of the wisdom and benefits of universal membership. In an age of growing interdependence, when security depends so much on developing new layers of cooperation between nations, it is inappropriate for some countries to take the benefits of greater security offered by the NPT while not accepting the obligations of membership. As with the Chemical Weapons Convention, to be comprehensively effective the NPT needs to have comprehensive adherence.

In the Asia Pacific region, the greatest immediate source of concern about nuclear proliferation is the Korean peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, more than five years after acceding to the Treaty, continues to operate an unsafeguarded reactor and persistently refuses to conclude the safeguards agreement with the IAEA that is required of it under the NPT. This situation is of great concern, and I urge all countries to take all bilateral and multilateral opportunities available to bring home to the DPRK the deep concern of the international community at its failure to comply with a key obligation of the Non Proliferation Treaty.

As Australia emphasised at the Fourth NPT Review Conference, the acceptance of the principle of fullscope safeguards as a condition of new nuclear supply remains of fundamental importance to controlling nuclear proliferation. It is a matter of regret that only one nuclear weapons state - the United States - applies that principle. We urge the other four nuclear weapon states, and other nuclear suppliers which have not already done so, to act responsibly and accept this principle as early as possible. We believe that there is also value in emerging suppliers joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose primary concern is to set supply conditions which work for non-proliferation but which allow trade in legitimate nuclear material and technology.

As an example of the sort of meticulous and detailed activity which takes place away from the headlines but which provides an essential part of the effort to prevent nuclear proliferation, we also need to work in the International Atomic Energy Agency during the 1990s on the detail of safeguards implementation. We should be concentrating particularly on special inspections, the early provision to the IAEA of design information on nuclear facilities, and the continuous effort of adapting safeguards to cope with expected developments in the plutonium end of the nuclear fuel cycle.

Biological Weapons. Another multilateral instrument in place, but also in need of strengthening, is the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). While over 110 countries are parties to the Convention, there is still a considerable way to go before membership is universal, and we must redouble our efforts to encourage non-parties to accede.

While the BWC, together with the Geneva Protocol of 1925 prohibiting the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons, have established a strong international norm against the development and use of biological weapons, the Convention lacks a robust verification regime. At the Third Review Conference in September this year, a central issue will be to make progress on verification against the belief held in some quarters that verification is not possible. I believe it is possible, particularly if the sources of ambiguity in the text of the Convention - which allegedly make it unverifiable - are resolved through explication and elaboration by the Review Conference.

A proposal currently circulating for the Review Conference to establish an expert working group on verification to meet after the Conference merits serious consideration. Other proposals - such as those to clarify the meaning of the Convention, to develop a list of pathogens which would help define the scope of the Convention, to improve the existing information exchanges, to develop a new information exchange on biological weapons defence measures, and to set up an oversight committee meeting between conferences - are also important measures that the Conference should consider and debate fully.

It is also important that the Conference address the issue of controlling BW proliferation. The Final Declaration of the Conference should spell out the measures that states parties could adopt as non-proliferation measures under Article III of the Convention.

Missiles. Iraq's use of ballistic missiles against civilian centres during the Gulf war was a powerful demonstration of the dangers to security posed by these means of weapons delivery. Missiles have the unfortunate attribute of being able to strike at a distance, with little or no warning and with only a very limited chance for the country under attack to institute effective counter-measures. They enable a belligerent to widen the scope of a conflict and engage in long range intimidation, especially because missiles can be a delivery system for weapons of mass destruction. That only increases the radius of insecurity around a particular area of tension, and causes a larger number of states to take precautionary measures. So the prospect of even one member of a region acquiring a missile capability is particularly destabilising, and risks generating extensive regional arms races.

It is imperative therefore that countries with the capacity to supply missiles and missile technology exercise particular caution and great restraint in their exports. Australia accepts the priority which members of the international community have placed on preventing missile proliferation, and we believe that the Missile Technology Control

Regime should press ahead with proposals to review and enhance the scope of the regime, encourage adherence to its provisions by emerging suppliers, and widen participation in the Regime.

Conventional Weapons. It has to be acknowledged that the international community has yet to come to grips with the problem posed by the huge volumes of conventional arms transfers. While agreements are in place, or under negotiation, to control or eliminate weapons of mass destruction, there is as yet no remotely comparable process for conventional weapons. We need also to acknowledge openly the difficulties which stand in the way of conventional arms control: compared to weapons of mass destruction, they are comparatively readily available; trade is well established and lucrative; and considerations of national sovereignty, and the legitimate responsibility of any government to ensure national security, mean that nations are reluctant to forgo the right to acquire conventional arms.

It is possible to contemplate an agreement which might constrain the transfer of massive amounts of equipment with offensive potential such as tanks or strike aircraft. But even to sketch the outline of such an agreement makes clear the degree of difficulty involved in achieving it. Among the difficult questions that will have to be addressed are: what equipment would be included and what excluded? who would judge what amount of trade was excessive? would countries be prepared to subject their weapons sales to friends and allies to multilateral control?

Short of comprehensive measures, useful results can flow from achieving transparency about military capabilities. This can assist in reducing suspicions and in building confidence, so removing some of the tinder of mistrust which underlies so many arms races. The United Nations Expert Group on Conventional Arms Transfers has been studying ways of promoting transparency, and at its last meeting was moving towards endorsing the establishment of a UN register of arms sales. I believe that would be a very useful step forward and Australia strongly supports the early adoption of such a recommendation.

A fundamental prerequisite of any form of multilateral restraint is effective national control of arms transfers. Australia has such a system in place and we are currently reviewing and sharpening the precision of its application. I urge all governments to implement similar controls. Australia would be ready to join international moves to establish a set of common criteria, a code of conduct which would introduce concepts of sufficiency, common security and international morality into an area marked by lack of restraint.

Clearly we are just starting out on a very long and arduous task in tackling conventional arms transfers. A great deal of elementary consensus building on the need for action has to



be done; and a great deal of thought about how we can act most effectively is before us. In that process, I believe the Permanent Five members of the Security Council, who between them account for the overwhelming bulk of conventional arms exports, have a particular responsibility. But again, as with other categories of weapons, the interests of the entire international community are engaged, and there can be no substitute for global multilateral approaches which ensure the cooperative involvement of all countries.

It is easy to identify the obstacles and problems with conventional arms control, but this is an area of arms control which must be tackled. We have to look beyond the obstacles and find a way to produce a better set of arrangements to prevent the kind of arms build-up which, as we have seen in the Gulf, can have appalling consequences.

If the Gulf crisis has demonstrated that aggression can be reversed by resolute collective action, it has also demonstrated graphically the dangers of weapons proliferation, and the amount of work that remains to be done in disarmament and arms control. We - governments and negotiators - have some important assets. The climate of international opinion is favourable to pressing ahead with the arms control and disarmament agenda. And the fact that international issues are no longer automatically pressed into the strait-jacket of superpower ideological competition provides us with an opportunity to build on the current willingness of the international community to seek cooperative solutions to common challenges.

But we cannot count on those favourable circumstances continuing indefinitely. International relations are inherently uncertain and changeable. We would do well to take advantage of the constructive climate while it exists, and press ahead now with the urgent outstanding issues that remain to be resolved. Now is the time for governments and arms control and disarmament negotiators to produce that extra leap of the imagination, that extra application of effort, that extra focus on resolution of outstanding issues, and that extra determination to build regimes which are fair and effective.

The obligation to grasp the moment is not just one for the superpowers, and not just one for the great powers and the major powers. Because so much of the arms control and disarmament agenda can only be addressed multilaterally, it is an obligation for all of us, whatever country we come from. What counts in this endeavour is not size or wealth or military capability: it is clarity of vision, imagination, confidence, energy and stamina. And they are characteristics you do not have to be a superpower, or a great power, or a major power, to possess in abundance.

The opportunity is clearly there for us to work together to put together the remaining elements of a network of linked arms control and disarmament agreements. We must put

together a network which will pick up the momentum created by the current positive global strategic environment, and carry that momentum on to build a more secure world in which the threat posed by excessive arms build-ups is at first contained, and then wound back.

Australia is keen to join you and others in working energetically and imaginatively together in this vital endeavour. We must work together to grasp the moment, so we can bequeath to future generations all over the world the legacy of a more ordered, a more rational, a saner and a safer system of international relations.

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