



**Second Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Science
Diplomacy Symposium**

High Level Session

[Keynote Speech]

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Ms. Karin Kneissl, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria,

Ms. Elba Rosa Perez Montoya, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba,

Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty Organization,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I'd like to thank my good friend Executive Secretary Zerbo for inviting me to participate in this Symposium and to commend him for his energetic and personal dedication to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

I am honored to be here today to support the CTBTO Preparatory Commission as it continues to play a critical role in promoting the long overdue entry into force of the CTBT.

Beyond entry into force, the Preparatory Commission also raises awareness on the acute dangers – to peace and security, to human health and to the environment – associated with nuclear testing.

And, despite the lack of full activation of all components of the Treaty's verification system, the International Monitoring System has proven its ability to verify the nuclear test ban.

All these efforts indeed demonstrates the CTBT's essential role within the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime by achieving the cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons.

The preservation of the norm against testing, alongside the norm against use, is critical to our global disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

It is a norm we must vehemently protect.

Preservation of the norm has been largely successful since, with one exception in recent years, all States have respected the norm created by the Treaty and upheld moratoriums on nuclear explosive tests.

While the norm against testing remains strong, the total elimination of nuclear weapons will require strengthening and expanding existing norms against such weapons.

However, the deteriorating international security environment and eroding respect for institutions pose serious challenges to this endeavor.

We are witnessing a return to Cold War style tensions, in a world that has grown more complex. Conflicts have become more intractable, protracted and deadly for civilians. Internal conflicts are rarely "internal". They often become inter-connected with regional tensions, and sometimes draw in major powers, in addition to the variety of non- state actors from terrorists to organized criminal groups.

Many of the mechanisms that used to exist during the Cold War to prevent a risk of a single incident quickly escalating into a major crisis, appears to have eroded. Some of the fundamental norms are violated, as we see in the return of chemical weapons use in Syria. In this dangerous world, many disarmament commitments made at the end of the Cold War remain unfulfilled, including practical steps to reduce dangers and ease international tensions. Many States appear to choose arms over dialogues and diplomacy.

In the realm of disarmament, multilateral negotiations have been deadlocked for more than two decades and bilateral channels between the world's largest military powers appears to be stagnated.

Burgeoning military expenditure has become commonplace and, highly relevant to the topic under discussion here today, science and technological advances are diversifying the means and methods of warfare.

It is in this context that we must remind ourselves why the United Nations pursues disarmament. Disarmament is at the heart of the system of collective security articulated in the United Nations Charter.

Disarmament is a driving force for international peace and security, it is a useful tool for ensuring national security, it contributes to the upholding of the principles of humanity, promotes sustainable development and safeguards the protection of civilians in conflict.

We would do well to remind ourselves of the rich history of disarmament, including the adoption of the very first resolution by the General Assembly that was devoted to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

It is against the backdrop of this precarious international security landscape, combined with a deep commitment by the United Nations to disarmament, that the Secretary-General launched a new disarmament agenda “*Securing Our Common Future*” yesterday at the University of Geneva.

The new disarmament agenda is predicated on a critical premise—that disarmament concerns every country and all weapons, from hand grenades to nuclear weapons.

The agenda outlines the availability of a diverse “disarmament toolbox”—including arms control, non-proliferation, prohibitions, restrictions, confidence-building, and, of course, elimination.

It reminds us that disarmament is not a utopian ideal, but a tangible pursuit to prevent conflict and mitigate its impact whenever and wherever it does occur.

The agenda has three main priorities—disarmament to save humanity; disarmament that saves lives; and disarmament for future generations.

It is holistic and comprehensive. The agenda attempts to create a clear and credible vision for sustainable security that serves humanity, draws from the past and builds towards the future.

I would like to say a few words about the three core priorities of the agenda before returning to the subject of the symposium.

“Disarmament to save humanity” centers on the total elimination of all categories of weapons of mass destruction and the prevention of the emergence

of new domains of strategic competition and conflict. Regarding the latter, the agenda calls for efforts to ensure the security and sustainability of outer space activities and the reining in of new types of destabilizing strategic weapons, such as long-range conventional weapons.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons is a central component of the agenda just as it is a core objective of the United Nations. Amongst other commitments, the Secretary-General and I pledge to increase our efforts to facilitate much needed dialogue between Member States to assist them in returning to a common vision and path leading to total elimination.

Ensuring respect for the norm against chemical and biological weapons is paramount to “disarmament to save humanity”. Regarding chemical weapons, the Security Council must take action in responding to their use and stop impunity.

With respect to biological weapons, beyond preventing any use, we need to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention to ensure an adequate response in case of use of disease as a weapon.

Violations of the norms against chemical and biological weapons can in no way become normal.

Secondly, the Secretary General’s agenda promotes “disarmament that saves lives” focusing on the challenges related to conventional weapons. The growing complexity of conflict, and its increasing urbanization, is resulting in new threats to civilians and higher levels of armed violence. We are also witnessing unhealthy levels of military expenditure and investment in tools of warfare.

The agenda focuses on measures to mitigate humanitarian impact of conventional weapons placing the human being front and center of our efforts.

Addressing the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, including improvised devices, and mainstreaming the gendered impact of arms are key components of this priority.

Through the agenda, the United Nations is also committed to addressing the excessive accumulation and illicit trade in conventional arms, including through the establishment of a new funding mechanism. The Secretary-General has set out new ways to fund work by governments and United Nations offices to collaboratively tackle the small arms threat from every angle. Activities will range from managing and destroying weapons and ammunitions to supporting law enforcement and educating the public.

Moreover, arms regulation will be integrated into broader work aimed at prevention and development. The agenda outlines clearly how disarmament is relevant to the achievement of the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development from the goals related to peace, justice and strong institutions, to gender equality, and to safer cities.

Thirdly, the Secretary General's agenda promotes "disarmament for future generations". This area attempts to ensure that the same innovations in science and technology that will benefit millions are not weaponized to undermine our security.

We must understand the implications posed by developments in science and technology through studies, dialogue and legal reviews., including reviews

of new weapons to ensure their compliance with international humanitarian law. The United Nations will support these efforts and raise greater awareness around the potential impact of science and technology on international peace and security and disarmament matters.

In order to effectively implement these three core priorities, the agenda calls for strengthened partnerships for disarmament.

We will look to create the coalition for disarmament needed in the 21st Century to bolster our peace and prosperity. We need greater political will in the multilateral disarmament processes. We need to promote actors beyond government representatives and diplomats to be involved and contribute to the discussions. They include civil society organizations, experts, private sector, industry, scientists, and engineers. We also need more ownership and activism from the broader public. We have to benefit from women's contributions, as has always been the case in history, and I'm pleased to be a part of this all female panel today. Women must be fully involved in disarmament negotiation and decision-making processes. We must also empower young people of today, as they are the ultimate force for change in the world.

As I noted, the agenda is comprehensive, but it is not exhaustive. It is not meant as a substitute for the responsibilities of Member States. Instead, the aim is to reinvigorate international disarmament discussions, explore new ideas and create new momentum for joint action.

Before I conclude, let me highlight two most relevant areas of the Secretary-General's Agenda for today's symposium: one related to nuclear disarmament and the other related to science and technology.

First, the agenda reaffirms the Secretary-General's unwavering commitment to nuclear disarmament and to preserving the norm against nuclear testing.

The agenda recognizes the intrinsic role of the CTBT and stresses the need for every effort to be made to bring the treaty into force and preserve its place in the international disarmament architecture. The agenda recognizes the value of the International Monitoring System, and its proven effectiveness, including through detecting the events in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The Secretary-General explicitly appeals to all remaining States whose ratifications are required to bring the CTBT into force to commit to sign the Treaty as soon as possible, if they have not already done so, and to accelerate the completion of their ratification processes. There are no excuses to continue delaying this shared objective any further.

Second, the agenda plainly states we must ensure that developments in science and technology are used only to enhance our security and prosperity, not threaten them.

In this regard, the CTBTO has demonstrated real foresight in holding this symposium at a time when the world is in the midst of a revolution in scientific and technological innovations.

The so-called "Fourth Industrial Revolution" will – and in many cases already has started to – reshape societies, economies and militaries. This revolution cuts both ways – the same scientific and technological developments that can facilitate sustainable development can also potentially introduce new

means and methods of warfare with unclear and potentially dangerous implications.

The Secretary-General's agenda addresses these various challenges, including by supporting Member States deliberations on new weapons technologies and convening multi-stakeholder dialogue to examine their implications. In this regard, the Secretary-General is committed to working with scientists, engineers, private sector and industry to encourage responsible innovation and its application for peaceful purposes. We urgently need their insights and we need to work with them in this area where we can jointly have a game-changing preventive impact on our future security.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General's agenda presents us with an opportunity to inject dynamism into our collective efforts to create a safer and more secure world.

It is an opportunity to demonstrate the centrality of disarmament to preventing, mitigating and resolving conflicts.

The United Nations is committed to do its part through concrete, practical actions. The Secretary General and I will work hand-in-hand with Member States to bridge differences and make progress.

We will, nonetheless, count on the support of the CTBTO, other international organizations, civil society and all relevant stakeholders to bring the agenda to fruition.

I look forward to working with you towards securing our common future.

Thank you.