



**Keynote Address by
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament
Affairs
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2018 Annual Arms Control Conference and Experts Forum

**Shifting Global Dynamics: Implications for Arms Control and Stability
“Disarmament in a Changing Global Setting”**



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Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to thank the co-organizers for inviting me to speak with you today. Thank you also to Dr. Alexander Brakel for that introduction. I am pleased to be back in Israel, this time in my capacity as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The theme of this conference is particularly timely for the United Nations. It was the Secretary-General's concern over the shifting global dynamic that led him less than six weeks ago to launch his agenda for disarmament, entitled "Securing Our Common Future".

Some have asked whether now is the right time for a new push on disarmament.

Indeed, over much of the past decade, we have seen a steady deterioration of the international security environment. Relations among the major powers have grown increasingly strained, and Cold War-style tensions have returned. Traditional mechanisms for dialogue and communications seem to be diluted.

These developments are taking place against a backdrop of converging global challenges and a more complex international system. Respect for international norms and institutions are eroding. Global military spending and capabilities are at their highest point since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Conflicts have become more intractable, protracted and deadly for civilians. Internal conflicts are rarely "internal" – they are embedded within regional tensions, can draw in major powers and involve a variety of non-state actors, including terrorist groups, many of whom are armed with increasingly sophisticated weapons.

The norm against chemical weapons use has been repeatedly violated, and deep divisions within the international community have hampered effective responses.

It was precisely as a response to these trends and dynamic that the Secretary-General launched his agenda for disarmament.

His agenda is not about utopian ideals. Rather, it promotes a clear-eyed understanding of the tangible role disarmament and arms control can play in preventing, mitigating and resolving conflict.

It stresses the importance of disarmament, arms-control and non-proliferation efforts in promoting stability and security, and as a tool for ensuring national security, as well as the contribution it makes to upholding the principles of humanity, promoting sustainable development and safeguarding the protection of civilians in conflict.

It seeks to remind UN Member States of the reason why they placed disarmament at the heart of the collective security system articulated in the United Nations Charter.

The agenda is comprehensive, but not exhaustive. Nor is it meant to substitute for the responsibilities of Member States. Its primary aim is to reinvigorate international disarmament discussions, explore new ideas and create new momentum for joint action.

I will return to the specific details of the agenda later in my remarks. I first want to say a few additional words about why disarmament is more important – and not less – in situations of deteriorated political and security relations, as I think this aspect is particularly relevant to this region.

It is often in times of heightened tensions and conflict that many resort to the fallacy that security can be found only through the strength of arms and not through the wisdom of dialogue and cooperation. This perspective is not only deeply dangerous, but also fundamentally ahistorical.

In the second half of the 20th Century, measures for arms control and disarmament played a crucial role in conflict prevention, stabilization, communication and dialogue, as well as risk mitigation, de-escalation and in reducing tensions. For an unbroken period of 55 years, verifiable and legally binding measures for arms control have helped to prevent war, build trust and lay the groundwork for the improvement of international relations.

United Nations entities have played a leading role in many of these efforts, including in this region. For instance, speaking from the perspective of my prior experience with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, I have no doubt that the presence and activities of UNDOF and UNIFIL have prevented the resumption of large-scale armed conflict among the regional States.

At the Security Council debate on the situation in the Middle East convened just last week by the Russian Federation, the Secretary-General said:

“During the Cold War, ideological rivals still found ways to talk and cooperate despite their deep divides, for example through the Helsinki process. I do not see why countries of the region cannot find a similar platform to come together, drawing experience from one another and enhancing opportunities for possible political, environmental, socio-economic or security cooperation.”

Yet, broad and inclusive dialogue on security, disarmament and arms control remains lacking in the Middle East. History has proven that disarmament is not a luxury that we can only enjoy in times of peace and stability. It is rather an essential means of building trust, preventing and ending conflict and strengthening relations. Dialogue on arms control itself can constitute a confidence-building measure, paving the way for future agreements and the easing of international tensions.

In this sense, we have recently witnessed with a sense of cautious optimism regarding the improvement of inter-Korean relations and the historic summit between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the United States. We hope that these steps will lead to agreement on the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council.

The diplomatic approach for the resolution of the situation on the Korean Peninsula is one example of how arms control dialogue and agreements can form the basis for integrated political solutions leading to improved regional security frameworks. But to succeed, arms control and disarmament measures must be concrete, they must be effectively verified and they must be faithfully implemented.

In that connection, the preservation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with the Islamic Republic of Iran remains the best way to build lasting non-proliferation in the Middle East. It is unclear how the security of any State in the region would benefit from a return to the situation before the JCPOA, without the unprecedented restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities and without the unprecedented monitoring and verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

It is natural that States of this region desire to see their various security-related concerns addressed. However, the Secretary-General has also called for issues not directly related to the JCPOA to be addressed without prejudice to the preservation of the agreement.

Syria is a topic in itself. Last week, as a response to the military offensive in southwestern Syria, the Secretary-General urged the international community to unite to put an end to this expanding conflict, which risks further de-stabilizing the region, and worsening the deep humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighboring states.

This situation, and the situation in Yemen, underscore the urgent need for the States of the region, possibly with support from the United Nations, to seek a new paradigm for dialogue and cooperation to address the full spectrum of inter-connected security challenges. From the threat of non-state armed groups to weapons of mass destruction, no country in this region can over-come these alone, and the current trajectory of regional escalation is increasing dangers for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General's disarmament agenda is focused on three distinct but mutually reinforcing priorities: disarmament to save humanity; disarmament that save lives; and disarmament for future generations.

The first, disarmament to save humanity, aims to reduce and eliminate weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, chemical and biological.

As nuclear disarmament and strategic security are prominent themes in this conference, I will largely focus on theses aspects of the Agenda. But first, I want to briefly outline the other priorities.

The second priority, disarmament that saves lives, aims to reduce and mitigate the impact of conventional weapons. To facilitate this goal, the Secretary-General will redouble his support to Member States in developing appropriate limitations, common standards and operational policies on the use of explosive weapons in urban areas. He will work to ensure that the UN system is able to address the challenge of illicit small arms and ammunition, including from dedicated resources within his Peacebuilding Fund.

The third priority, disarmament for future generations, focuses on ensuring that developments in science and technology are not diverted or misused in ways that undermine security. It stresses the importance of responsible innovation and application and of the need for multi-stakeholder coalitions, including the private sector, to address these challenges. The agenda also affirms the Secretary-General's strong commitment to use his good offices to manage conflict resulting from acts committed in cyber space.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General's agenda reaffirms that, as nuclear weapons are the only class of weapons with potentially existential consequences, their total elimination must remain our priority. It is realistic about the significant challenges to this goal and analyzes that as trust and confidence between nuclear-armed States erodes and as geopolitical tensions undermine diplomacy, the danger of a nuclear detonation – whether intentional or accidental – becomes more acute.

The end of the Cold War precipitated an era of monumental and historic gains in nuclear disarmament. Based on the shared notion that a nuclear war could never be won and, therefore, must never be fought, and under the dedicated leadership of the United States and the Russian Federation, the world witnessed massive reductions in nuclear arsenals. A string of bilateral arms control agreements from SALT to New START ensured a continuous process of nuclear disarmament.

Unfortunately, progress in achieving this goal has not only stalled, but appears to be going backwards.

The historic arms control agreements of the Cold War are under threat and there is a complete absence of any negotiations for further nuclear arms reductions.

Should the New START agreement expire without a successor in 2021, it will be the first time in fifty years that negotiations have not been underway or an agreement in force for the reductions of nuclear arsenals. In parallel, nuclear-weapon States are modernizing their arsenals or developing new weapons systems. Questions are being asked about whether we are in the middle of a new arms race based on quality, not quantity, of nuclear weapons.

If they were to continue this path, the security of all nations and their people would be put in jeopardy – not least those of nuclear-weapon States.

The Secretary-General's agenda makes clear that disarmament does not weaken national security. Quite the opposite – verifiable efforts to reduce the dangers posed by nuclear weapons bolster regional and international stability, and promote the necessary confidence and trust to facilitate peaceful solutions.

The agenda outlines the clear need for dialogue and negotiation among all States to discern how best to shore up the historical gains of the past, while charting a path to those agreements that will safeguard us against future threats.

As a first step, the Russian Federation and the United States should move to extend New START and commence the dialogue on further agreements on reductions. They should be encouraged to resolve their dispute over the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. I hope that this will be amongst the list of priority issues to be discussed at the planned Summit meeting between Presidents Trump and Putin on 16 July in Helsinki.

They should be joined by the other nuclear-weapon States in taking concrete action to reduce current nuclear dangers, including reductions in stockpiles of all types of nuclear weapons; ensuring the non-use of nuclear weapons; reducing the role and significance of nuclear weapons; reducing their operational readiness; constraining the development of new types of nuclear weapons; increasing transparency; and taking measures to build confidence and trust.

Second, the situation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has starkly demonstrated the need to consolidate the legal regime against nuclear tests. All States that have not yet done so should join the CTBT without delay. In the meantime, they should refrain from taking any actions that are detrimental to the objectives and purposes of the CTBT.

Third, there are technical and practical steps that all States can engage in. These include measures to strengthen and consolidate nuclear-weapon-free zones, and developing approaches to verify nuclear disarmament, which is a key element of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Another key element would be the negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Finally, all States need to find their way back to common ground on how to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Divisions over the humanitarian and security approaches is, as the Secretary-General argues, a false dichotomy: Human, national and global security are indivisible.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has its critics, but it is inarguable that it demonstrates the strong and legitimate international support that exists for a permanent end to the threat posed by nuclear arms.

Likewise, the NPT remains the beating heart of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and central to the maintenance of international peace and security. But diverging views on how to strengthen the Treaty and fully implement its commitments are placing it under mounting pressure.

I welcome the joint statement by the foreign ministers of the three depositaries of the NPT last week, in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty's opening for signature. Their recommitment to the total elimination of nuclear weapons is important in the current environment. Ensuring the NPT's continued health and vitality should be its States parties' utmost priority. This requires all States parties to work faithfully to fully implement their obligations and commitments made under the NPT.

Reversing the further deterioration of the international security environment requires a return to the mindset where the pursuit of nuclear disarmament is understood as the best means for preserving peace, preventing major inter-State war and maintaining stability in times of turbulence.

Those States possessing nuclear weapons have a responsibility to lead efforts to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, to reduce nuclear dangers and to show the way on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General and I will provide whatever assistance we can, be it through facilitation of dialogue or acting as an 'honest broker'. We are an instrument of Member States and the international community, and we strive to be a useful and effective one.

Our role is to work hand-in-hand with Member States, wherever and however possible, to bridge differences, to return to a common vision and the path leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

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

Thank you very much.