

Brief presentation by Dr. J. Enkhsaikhan on the importance of diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policy

22 August 2009

Hiroshima

First of all I would like to thank JPPNW for hosting this important symposium entitled “Toward the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons: From Hiroshima to the World” and for inviting me to present a paper for discussion on the importance of diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policy.

Today there is a renewed hope that nuclear weapons could be prohibited and in the long run eventually eliminated. The statements made recently by US President Obama, by Russian leaders, by the G-8, the NAM are all positive and generate important signs that underline that concerted efforts can bring closer the humankind to its cherished goal.

With raised hopes come increased responsibility to act decisively. It is important that the concrete decisive activities are undertaken now when nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are high on global agenda:

- US and Russia are negotiating a legally-binding arms reduction treaty with the long term goal of “achieving a nuclear free world”
- US and NATO are beginning to review their nuclear concepts and doctrines
- There is a flood of international initiatives and lively debates and discussions on the issue
- Also in May of next year the international community is to review implementation of the NPT and, hopefully, take decisions on future actions.

As the states with almost 95 % of all nuclear weapons, naturally it is for the US and Russia to take the lead. At a certain stage of nuclear-weapons reductions, the other three nuclear-weapons states – China, France and Great Britain – would have to get involved. The same goes for the other three nuclear-weapon states though they are not officially recognized as such. The issue of the North Korean nuclear weapons should also be addressed, lest it could trigger mutual suspicions and regional arms race.

Reducing nuclear arsenals is very important. That is clear. Also numerous parallel measures need to be taken. These include speedy ratification and entry into force of the CTBT, prohibition of production of nuclear fissile materials, strengthening the NPT and the international inspection regime, etc. These are well known measures, they are clearly reflected in the “13 steps” agreed upon in 2000 and need no further elaboration.

One of the important measures would be to halt and reverse the trend of expanding the role of nuclear weapons to cover threats from chemical and biological weapons and the adoption of the policy of nuclear preemption. It is important to review

the present nuclear strategic concepts and doctrines, including the notion of nuclear weapons being “the supreme guarantee of security” and putting an end to nuclear sharing and nuclear umbrella policies. These measures could be initiated by the respective non-nuclear-weapon states and undertaken together with nuclear-weapon states. I mean members of the NATO alliance and those that are under nuclear umbrella. There are 29 such countries, some of them strong advocates of nuclear disarmament.

The US and NATO are in the process of revising their nuclear doctrines. This provides an opportunity to diminish the role of nuclear weapons, if not delegitimize them altogether.

In order to do that the present NATO Strategic Concept needs to be changed so as to reflect the overall changing strategic environment. At present non-nuclear weapon members of the NATO alliance participate in collective nuclear defense planning and in consultations regarding command and control arrangements. 5 non-nuclear-weapon members¹ are even hosting several hundred US “sub-strategic” or tactical nuclear weapons². That is nuclear sharing. It violates the intent of Articles I and II of the NPT.³

NATO experts argue that nuclear sharing was compatible with the NPT.⁴ Articles I and II of the treaty applied “under any circumstances”. This interpretation needs to be revised and changed. National and international NGOs, including IALANA and other credible organizations⁵ could provide legal, political and moral arguments proving the illegal and amoral nature of nuclear sharing.

Nuclear sharing also creates obstacles for providing negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon states and establishing a NWFZ in Europe. Such policies, together with the refusal to rule out first use of nuclear weapons, need to be changed. The governments of the 29 states can contribute to nuclear non-proliferation by addressing these issues over which they have some say if not control.

¹ Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

² US B61 ‘gravity’ bombs

³ Article I of the NPT states: “Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly.”

Article II of the NPT states: “Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly ...”.

⁴ Thus in 1968 during U.S. ratification of the treaty, Secretary of State Dean Rusk declared at the U.S. Senate that the NPT “does not deal with arrangements for deployment of nuclear weapons within Allied territory, as these do not involve any transfer of nuclear weapons or control over them unless and until a decision were made to go to war, at which time the treaty would no longer be controlling.” Many states later questioned whether the statement was in conformity of the NPT. Thus in 1995 Mexico, Philippines, Tanzania and others asked for clarification as to whether nuclear sharing was in breach of Articles I and II of the treaty. In 1998 Egypt and in 1999 the New Agenda Coalition raised questions and proposed languages to the effect that all articles of NPT are binding on all its parties, at all times and in all circumstances.

⁵ NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security, Abolition 2000, etc.

Another aspect of reducing the political legitimacy and value of nuclear weapons is reviewing the concept and application of the so-called extended deterrent or widely known as the ‘nuclear umbrella’. They are considered as safety valves against nuclear threat as well as a way of keeping the beneficiaries nuclear-weapon free. It is a commitment by a nuclear-weapon state to defend a non-nuclear-weapon ally.⁶

After DPRK’s second nuclear test last May, there is a talk of even ‘extended’ nuclear umbrella. Though experts underline that the extended deterrence is less about retaliation and more about posturing⁷, this does not change the nature of the concept. If extended deterrence implies that a nuclear response could follow chemical, biological, missile or nuclear attack, then that would lower the nuclear threshold and reinforce the first use concept with all the ensuing ramifications and consequences⁸.

The notion that extended deterrence and nuclear umbrella are needed as long as there are nuclear weapons would mean in fact that there would be not end to nuclear threat. To leave this vicious circle of the cold war, the countries that are not a bit threatened by nuclear weapons, such as Australia, could volunteer to abandon the umbrella protection. This would set a good example and would positively affect the atmosphere.

Nuclear umbrella is needed to justify continued justification of nuclear weapons. That is why one should talk not about extended deterrence or nuclear umbrella, but rather ending them and promoting non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Changing nuclear doctrines, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons and thus promoting confidence, together with other steps agreed upon in 2000 would promote nuclear disarmament. The time for action is now. It is important that positive and constructive signals come from Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

⁶ At present 29 states, including Japan, South Korea, NATO members and Australia are under US “nuclear umbrella”.

⁷ i.e. sending a message, in this case to DPRK, that it would not achieve any military or political objectives when attacking US ally (or allies).

⁸ Extended nuclear umbrella could lead to re-deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea as well as to its increase in sophisticated weapons (increase in the number of precision-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions – JDAMS or acquisition of joint air-to-surface, standoff (cruise) missiles – JASSMs). Japan is believed to be interested in acquiring Tomahawk Land-Attack Missiles – the TLAMs, which could affect Chinese interests, etc. This would only result in increased pressure for a regional arms race.