

Mongolia leads nuclear weapon free zone stance

The Mongol Messenger interviewed Mongolian Ambassador to Austria, J. Enkhsaikhan on Mongolia's nuclear weapon-free zone stance.

MM: This year, the press reported on two trilateral meetings held in Geneva to discuss the institutionalization of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) status. What was discussed at the meetings and how productive were they?

Ambassador: Yes, Chinese, Russian and Mongolian delegates met twice this year to discuss the Mongolian draft treaty regarding institutionalizing its status. The treaty is intended to give legal recognition to Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. In brief, Mongolia will pledge its territory will be free of nuclear weapons, and our two neighbours will pledge not to contribute to acts that could lead Mongolia to violate that status. At the Geneva meetings, the Russian and Chinese representatives raised questions regarding Mongolia's draft treaty and its provisions. That is natural. From the meetings they have a pretty good idea about our position and what we want to achieve. They were told their interests would be well served by such a treaty since it would be in line with their mutual commitment not to use neighbouring third states' territories against the interests of the other.

MM: Why haven't negotiations on the draft treaty started? Are there any problems or roadblocks?

Ambassador: At the end of the second Geneva meeting in September, China and Russia presented the Mongolians with a joint paper listing questions they wanted answered. This fact in itself demonstrates they are serious about negotiations. The response to these questions could mark the start of the negotiations. In short we have been meeting, but not yet negotiating.

The main issue they want to address at this stage is the number of parties the treaty should have. They believe that since the treaty would be dealing with nuclear security issues, not only China and Russia, but another three recognized nuclear-weapon states (the P-3), i.e. US, UK and France should be equally involved. The Mongolian draft treaty envisages that the P-3 would join negotiations at some stage and, as in the case of other NWFZs, all

five nuclear-weapon states (the P-5) would be asked to provide assurances with respect to Mongolia's status and cooperate in its implementation. The nuclear-weapon states so far have been cautious. They believe that it might set a precedence in providing assurances to other individual states, or separately, not jointly as the P-5. However, they already set such a precedence when in 1994 they provided assurances to Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Since they have already declared Mongolia's status as a unique case, then the response, naturally, could also be 'unique.'

MM: What is the position of the P-3 and of other states on this issue?

Ambassador: Though the P-5 argues that Mongolia's case is unique and needs an equally unique approach or solution, they are still hesitant to set a precedence. We argue that progress in general, and finding solutions to diverse international issues are always precedent-setting, and that without a creative approach it is doubtful that any international issue would be solved. Nothing stands still.

MM: I agree. However issues that affect security interests of states cannot be easily solved.

Ambassador: Yes. However, as I said, nothing stands still. Circumstances change and international issues have to be addressed accordingly. A year ago there was little hope that talks on banning fissile materials would start soon or that entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty could be achieved soon. As for other states I would say that the entire international community supports Mongolia and its policy of institutionalizing the status. Thus the heads of state and government of the Non-Aligned Movement last July in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt welcomed the start of the talks by Mongolia with its two neighbours, to conclude a treaty soon.

MM: How are preparations for the 2010 NPT Review Conference proceeding? How will Mongolia participate in that conference?

Ambassador: Mongolia is now an integral part of the expanding network of NWFZs, which unite two thirds of the international community. In this capacity, it was invited to Mexico in 2005 to participate in the first international NWFZ's conference. The conference reaffirmed its recognition and full support of Mongolia's status. In April of this year Mongolia hosted the meeting of NWFZ's focal points



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to prepare for the second international conference and for the 2010 NPT review conference. The latter's secretariat has asked Mongolia, like other NWFZs, to prepare and submit a memorandum regarding the consolidation of its status for consideration at the 2010 NPT conference.

MM: On November 26-27 the Board of Governors of IAEA met in Vienna. I believe that Mongolia, as a member of the Board, participated in the meeting. What is Mongolia's priority on the Board of Directors?

Ambassador: It is the second time Mongolia has served on the Board of Governors. The first time was in the early 1980s. Since then the world has changed and the importance of the Agency in ensuring nuclear security, providing cleaner sources of energy and promoting people's health and well-being have increased. The Board of Governors is the main executive body of the Agency, which examines and recommends on the Agency's accounts, programs and budget. It also approves the publication of nuclear safety standards and safeguards agreements. Within the framework of the latter function, it considers implementation of safeguard agreements in Iran and Syria as well as application of safeguards in the DPRK. For the first time since 2006,

the Board adopted a strong resolution regarding the Iran issue last week. Though the safeguards issue is an important component of the Agency's activity, it is the most known and commented on.

On the other hand the Agency's activities in peaceful application of nuclear energy, including preventing and fighting cancer, ensuring food security, nuclear safety and security and developing nuclear energy are not so well known. Mongolia's priority is to promote the Agency's activities in these areas of peaceful application. Thus we are working very closely with the Agency's departments of technical cooperation and human health, and are taking an active part in the work of the Board's Technical Assistance and Cooperation Committee (see Embassy's website at embassy.mn).

MM: What is Mongolia's position on the Iran issue?

Ambassador: Mongolia has always supported international efforts to resolve this issue on the basis of goodwill and cooperation. That is why we welcomed the outcome from the October 1 meeting of Iran with the six nations (the P5 + Germany) as well as Dr El-Baradei's efforts regarding refuelling the Tehran Research Reactor as confidence-building measures.

However, since no tangible progress has been made over the last years on the Iran issue, Mongolia, together with the overwhelming majority of the members of the Board voted in favour of P5 + Germany resolution in the hope that this would give impetus to international efforts to move this issue from the present impasse. This resolution is in line with the Dr. El-Baradei's report on this issue. It is intended to send a very strong signal of concern of the international community over this impasse that exists despite the previous decisions of the Board of Governors and United Nations Security Council resolutions on this issue, including suspension of enrichment related activities or heavy water projects. Status quo and especially escalation of mutual recriminations will not solve the problem. The only viable solution is for Iran to cooperate fully with IAEA in a transparent manner since there are still many questions that need to be answered before the Agency can give assurances of exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear program. Mongolia also believes that besides Israel's position, Iran's issue is an additional impediment to start discussion of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the volatile region of the Middle-East.



J. Enkhsaikhan with Mohamed ElBaradei



'Focal Point Meeting for Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zones and Mongolia', Ulaanbaatar, April 27-28, 2009