



**Outlook for the 2015 NPT Review Conference
and the Prague Agenda**

By

Angela Kane
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs



The Prague Agenda 2014

*Conference hosted by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
and the Institute of International Relations in Prague*

Prague, Czech Republic
5 December 2014

I wish at the outset to thank Petr Drulák for inviting me to address this conference on the Prague Agenda. It is always a pleasure to visit this beautiful city, especially for the purpose of speaking on some of my favourite disarmament issues.

In the five years that have passed since President Obama's speech at Hradcany Square outlining his vision of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Institute of International Relations, and their partners at Metropolitan and Charles Universities have organized several events to discuss the issues raised in that speech. Their combined efforts suggest a collective desire to ensure that that historic speech was not simply a single isolated event, but part of an evolving process.

I welcome that approach and wish to contribute to that discussion today by addressing certain issues relating to the 2015 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, including some relevant regional issues.

My remarks today will begin on a somewhat cautionary note. As the UN's High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, I have among my official responsibilities a duty to do all I can to assist the Secretary-General, Member States, and civil society to pursue the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament is not, however, an end in itself. It is instead a vital part of a larger security system based on principles and obligations found in the UN Charter. These include not just disarmament, but also the "regulation of armaments", the fundamental norms requiring the peaceful resolution of disputes and prohibiting the threat or use of force, the advancement of social and economic development, the protection of human rights, and the strengthening of the rule of law.

There is a synergy among these goals and in the activities to achieve them—each is important in the maintenance of international peace and security. The architects of the Charter intended these activities to be mutually reinforcing and to be pursued together, rather than in any particular step-by-step sequence.

A world free of nuclear weapons, in short, would not simply be today's world minus nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament contributes to peace and security, yet it also benefits from progress in cultivating a wider environment of trust, cooperation and mutual confidence. Hence as we reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons, we must also limit conventional arms, substantially improve existing mechanisms and institutions for resolving disputes peacefully, and promote even larger goals of justice and prosperity. One should not therefore view any one of these goals as a "precondition" for achieving another—they are all integral components of a system to guide the conduct of international relations in the Post-War world.

As for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, it has specific purposes relating both to the assessment of past implementation of the treaty and initiatives to meet future challenges. Halting the spread of nuclear weapons is one such goal, along with pursuing "negotiations in good faith" on nuclear disarmament, and the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Another goal found the NPT, though typically not addressed in the review process, is the pursuit of a treaty on "general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control"—this was also not a theme addressed in President Obama's speech, which dealt only with nuclear weapons. I believe the time will come when the relationship between nuclear disarmament and conventional arms control will once again be addressed more directly in multilateral deliberations. This could begin in the NPT review process, in

the UN disarmament machinery, or in another multilateral setting, such as a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on disarmament.

It could also come about in the course of pursuing a nuclear weapons convention or a framework of mutually reinforcing legal instruments with the same goal, as recognized by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his five-point nuclear disarmament proposal of 2008. Many people recall that proposal, but forget that it also included an element relating to conventional arms control and other issues extending beyond nuclear disarmament per se.

Based on past practice, however, I concede that the Review Conference next year will not likely address these larger issues and will instead conform to the traditional focus on non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Now it is obvious that there is a malaise among NPT States Parties regarding their treaty regime. Progress in nuclear disarmament is widely viewed as disappointing. Nuclear-weapon modernization programmes are underway with plans extending for decades—at this rate, the goals of Article VI might not be achieved before the treaty’s Centenary in 2070 ... if then. The lack of disarmament negotiations adds to this malaise. And while we hear that nuclear weapons may be playing a “reduced role” in the security postures of possessor states, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence persists, which only adds to new proliferation risks as other States pursue a dark twist on President Obama’s 2009 speech—namely, the illusory peace and security obtained through the *acquisition* of nuclear weapons.

There has of course been some progress in reducing deployments of strategic offensive nuclear weapons, as seen in the signature here in Prague of the New START Treaty four years ago. Some states have stopped producing nuclear materials for use in weapons and have dismantled their relevant facilities, while closing nuclear test sites. These are all welcome developments. Yet when it comes to the widely agreed norms of disarmament—including verification, transparency, irreversibility, universality, and bindingness—we can only see the scale of work that remains ahead.

The difficulties in moving forward on nuclear disarmament have certainly had their effects in weakening prospects for strengthening non-proliferation controls. There are persisting concerns being voiced in the NPT review process that the treaty contains a double-standard requiring strict and increasingly intrusive non-proliferation controls with a *laissez faire* approach reserved for the nuclear-weapon States. The more this treaty is perceived as inequitable, the less effective it will be.

As the basic fairness of the “NPT bargain” increasingly comes into question, it is not surprising that difficulties have been encountered in achieving such non-proliferation goals as gaining universal support for the IAEA’s Additional Protocol, strengthening controls over sensitive parts of the nuclear fuel cycle, adopting stricter export controls, or concluding a fissile material treaty. The often-heard assertion that all of these non-proliferation controls must be strengthened as a precondition for nuclear disarmament to proceed has been widely rejected by most NPT States Parties. This line of argument will never command a consensus in the NPT review process or in any other multilateral disarmament arena.

One of the “wild cards” at the next Review Conference will be the impact of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which will take place on 8-9 December. It is clear that there is growing support both among Member States and

civil society for a humanitarian approach to disarmament, based on the catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons. It is certain that concerned States Parties will seek to incorporate this humanitarian theme into the Final Document of that 2015 conference, which will help to ensure that this theme remains a focus of future meetings of States Parties as they work to strengthen compliance with the disarmament provisions of that treaty. Future NPT Review Conferences as well as deliberations in the UN disarmament machinery will increasingly address this humanitarian theme, and the political consequences of this development may well help to improve accountability for fulfilling disarmament commitments.

Yet progress in disarmament—however necessary—will not alone be *sufficient* as a foundation for the future of the NPT. When the NPT was extended indefinitely in 1995, part of the “package deal” leading to that decision was the “Resolution on the Middle East”. It called upon all States in the region to take practical steps in appropriate forums aimed at making progress towards a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. It also called upon such States to refrain from taking any measures that would preclude the achievement of this objective.

This linkage of the establishment of this zone to the decision on the indefinite extension of the treaty is very significant. A nuclear-weapon-free zone for this region has been a goal found in annual General Assembly resolutions since 1974—and there has never been a single negative vote on any of those resolutions. The broader WMD-free zone has been repeatedly endorsed in NPT arenas, including the Review Conferences of 2000 and 2010. The latter set forth specific benchmarks for convening a conference on the establishment of such a zone, including a role for the UN Secretary-General in co-convening such a conference. Though it has not yet taken place, consultations are continuing to fulfil this mandate—and they will surely continue, since this issue is not going to go away. I share the view of many that progress in convening such a conference and in commencing a process for establishing such a zone would substantially contribute to the wider peace process.

The United Nations, of course, has long endorsed such zones, as seen in our support for the establishment of the five regional nuclear-weapon-free zones. While regional security is certainly a key goal of those treaty regimes, it is not the only goal: all the zonal treaties explicitly identify nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament among their broader goals. Recent proposals, therefore, to establish new regional zones in Northeast Asia or the Arctic should arguably be viewed in a similar light—they offer regional security benefits, while further reinforcing a global norm against nuclear weapons themselves. They are worthy projects indeed, for they would contribute to both goals.

As for the future of the NPT regime, it has reached a crucial juncture. If the common interest prevails—and if participants recognize that national interests are served best by achieving each of the goals of the treaty—its future will be bright. Yet if such gatherings continue to resemble more of an arena for the staking of claims and the advancement of perceived interests of specific States, the treaty regime may soon be facing its last sunset.

For the sake of future generations and the future of our planet, I hope participants attending that event will choose their positions wisely.