

April 30, 2008

DPI/NGO BRIEFING ON
THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR
WEAPONS: PROSPECTS FOR THE 2010 REVIEW CONFERENCE

Thursday, April 24, 2008, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Background Information:

The Preparatory Committee (Prep Com) for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will hold its second session from April 28 to May 9, 2008 in the Assembly Hall at the United Nations Office in Geneva. This meeting is the second of three sessions that will be held prior to the 2010 Review Conference.

The Prep Com conference is open to all state parties to the treaty. The Conference will address both substantive and procedural issues related to the treaty and the upcoming Review Conference scheduled for 2010. The purpose of the Prep Com is to prepare for the Review Conference in terms of assessing the implementation of each article of the NPT and facilitate discussion among the states with a view to making recommendations for the Review Conference.

NPT is a landmark international treaty with the objective to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology. The objective is also to further the goal of nuclear disarmament and to promote cooperation the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The treaty was prepared for signature in 1968, entered into force in 1970 and extended indefinitely in 1995. A total 187 states have joined the Treaty including the five nuclear-weapons States.

A short film entitled “Genie in a Bottle: Unleashed” was shown before the briefing. The film was made by children to tell the story of the Manhattan Project in memory of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs in August, 2005. The film reflects on the history and tragedy of nuclear weapons and the impact they had on the victims and their families.

Impressions were given by children. Each spoke of themselves. The children were interviewed by Dr. Allan Watteenberg as a living reminder of who developed the bomb. The movie seemed to say that the bomb should not have been used against the Japanese. When President Truman came into office he knew nothing about the Manhattan Project that developed the bomb. The movie was produced by children for children. All interviews were by children.

Moderator:

Sasha Gorisek, DPI/NGO

Speakers:

Ambassador Mr. Sergio de Duarte, High Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs

Mr. John Burroughs, Executive Director, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy

1. The moderator, Ms Sasha Gorisek, welcomed everybody and introduced each of the speakers with their backgrounds.

2. The first speaker, Ambassador Durate has served 48 years in his work. He began by noting that the Non-Proliferation Treaty was the only instrument committing the countries to non-proliferation and disarmament. He indicated that it was important that all United Nations member states to abide by the treaty.

Mr. Duarte stressed the important role civil society has played in raising the awareness of nuclear weapons. He explained this was the reason why he decided to share his knowledge with United Nations NGOs. He discussed ways in which security perceptions have changed over the past four decades.

Mr. Duarte noted a misconception of several countries that believed non proliferation would diminish their security. He recognized that with time many have come to see the opposite as enhancing their security. Mr. Duarte stressed that security was better served by signing the treaty which was a binding agreement.

All but three countries have signed the agreement. Mr. Duarte explained that the three non-parties have important security perceptions which in their view justifies acquiring nuclear weapons. He noted that the high marks of evolution for the treaty took place between 1995 and 2000. He added that serious work must still be done. Mr. Duarte cited that terrorism added a difficult element to the equation.

He noted that the 2005 Conference demonstrated how irreconcilable the positions had become. But in 2006 things seemed to be more positive. Mr. Duarte added the Third Prep Com should avoid the procedural pitfalls of the past and concentrate on substance. He added that the Third Prep Com would be an important test due its mandate to make recommendations to the Review Conference

3. The second speaker, Mr. Burroughs, discussed the possible problems for the 2010 Review Conference such as the dispute over Iran's nuclear issue, the United States resistance to commitments made at the 1995 and 2000 conference. and Arab countries insisting on progress on bringing Israel to sign the treaty as non-nuclear weapon state.

Mr. Burroughs indicated possible solutions for these problems to be a resolution of the dispute over Iran's nuclear issue, progress in resolving the Palestine-Israel conflict and the movement to create a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.

He noted that more than one billion dollars has been spent to extend missile life to the year 2042. There are now more than 25,000 nuclear warheads and bombs in the world and there is no sign that countries are willing to cut these numbers.

Mr. Burroughs noted that problems of proliferation and terrorist acquisition must be addressed but can only be solved when the reduction and elimination of existing nuclear arsenals takes place.

Mr. Burroughs now spoke about the priorities of his organization. They are verified reduction of nuclear forces, negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, strengthening negative assurances, regulation of nuclear fuel supply and Production and the improved governance of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. He concluded by exploring the idea of having a weapons-of-mass-destruction free world and suggested a new treaty be implemented to ban all nuclear weapons in the future.

4. Questions/Answers:

4.1 Ambassador Duarte: In responding to a question indicated that the United Nations was a collection of sovereign States and each of the member states had high moral principles.

4.2 Mr. Burroughs: In responding to a question on the public perception of nuclear Weapons he stated by noting that public perception had changed since the 1980s. He added that people were aware of the situation but it was often not a high priority by them. The public was educated but just not activated.

4. Questions/Answers (Cont'd):

4.3 Mr. Burroughs: In responding to another question, he noted that if less money were spent on security, more money could be spent on meeting the MDGs. He added that in 2006, 26 billion dollars was spent worldwide on nuclear forces, warhead maintenance, research and delivery systems. He noted that if we had complete nuclear disarmament, the finances could be shifted to other areas such as poverty.

4.4 Mr. Burroughs: In conclusion, he responded to a question regarding nuclear Energy nuclear weapons by stating the need for a longterm transition from nuclear power to help eliminate nuclear weapons.

PDC George Weinstein
National UN Chairman