



“Pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons: The Secretary-General’s Five Point Proposal on nuclear disarmament”

Address to students, academics and civil society

Organised by Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention

By

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Ladies and Gentlemen

First, my sincere thanks to the University of Ottawa for providing such a beautiful venue. My gratitude must also go to the Canadian Government for inviting me to visit your capital and for being such excellent hosts.

I want to express my deep appreciation to Senator Douglas Roche and the Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, for organising this event today. I want to thank them for being a true friend and ally in the cause of nuclear disarmament.

We at UNODA are immensely grateful for your support for Secretary-General Ban and his Five Point Proposal on Nuclear Disarmament.

Finally, I would like to single out one individual – Mr Murray Thomson. It was Mr Thomson who, through hard work and dedication, was able to convince 870 members of the Order of Canada to support the Five Point Plan. Mr Thomson also laid the groundwork for the unanimous resolution in the Canadian Parliament supporting the plan. Mr Thomson, I salute you.

Canadians have a proud tradition of supporting nuclear disarmament and the United Nations. In this context, I warmly welcome and thank Prime Minister Trudeau for his pledge to “step up” and help the United Nations and for Canada’s renewed engagement in advancing disarmament.

I am also pleased to see that accession to the Arms Trade Treaty and preventing WMD proliferation are among the major foreign policy priorities outlined by Foreign Minister Dion. Canada and the United Nations have a historically strong partnership across the range of multilateral issues. We are grateful for that partnership and for Canada’s equally strong commitment to disarmament.

Canadian civil society has played vital role in driving that proud tradition. I would like to reaffirm my commitment to keep working in partnership with you to fulfil our shared commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you all know, the cause of nuclear disarmament is one to which Secretary-General Ban has been resolutely committed. In fact, it was only about three weeks into his tenure when he announced that disarmament would be one of his overarching priorities.

It was against the backdrop of the failed 2005 NPT Review Conference that the Secretary-General decided to set an example and make a personal commitment to disarmament. He recognised the world needed disarmament back at the forefront of the international agenda.

This was the goal of the Secretary-General's Five Point Plan – to plant a flag for all states, civil society and citizens to rally around.

It was the first such initiative by any Secretary-General.

Under the Five Point Plan, the Secretary-General proposed:

First: two approaches to multilateral negotiations. Second: greater responsibility by the permanent members of the Security Council in advancing disarmament. Third: the need for the rule of law. Fourth: accountability and transparency. Fifth: complementary measures to address all other weapons of mass destruction and challenges such as WMD terrorism, conventional weapons, and outer space.

Ladies and gentlemen

The plan was widely acclaimed. It was endorsed by the International Parliamentary Union, the World Conference on Speakers of Parliaments, Mayors for Peace, Nobel Laureates and, of course, the Canadian Parliament.

In the years that followed we witnessed some promising developments. The 2010 NPT Review Conference produced a 64-point action plan. Progress was made in countering WMD terrorism through the Nuclear Security Summit process and Security Council Resolution 1540. For the first time, steps were taken to regulate the global arms trade through the Arms Trade Treaty. In 2010, the Security Council held its first ever summit on disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is, therefore, so very disappointing to see how this progress has begun to ebb in recent years.

To begin with, beyond the New START treaty, there are no foreseeable negotiations on nuclear arsenal reductions.

The United Nations disarmament machinery has ground to halt. The Conference on Disarmament has not produced a substantive outcome for two decades.

As a reminder of this disappointing state of affairs, this year marks twenty years since the opening for signature of the CTBT and yet the treaty has still not entered into force.

Frustration is mounting. Especially among non-nuclear weapon states. They see minimal progress by nuclear weapon-States to honour their commitments to disarm. They view nuclear weapon modernisation programmes as explicitly contrary to these obligations.

Ladies and gentlemen

The world has become an increasingly turbulent place. If nuclear or radiological weapon entered into one of the world's many bloody regional conflicts, or if a non-state actor were to use cyber vulnerabilities to cause a nuclear incident, the likely result would be unimaginable humanitarian consequences.

It would, in the words of Senator Roche, "set off a catastrophe of epic proportions".

We should remember the final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference: The total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Moving forward, we need to build on the common ground of the collective aspiration for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The international community agrees on the destination – a world free of nuclear weapons. However, there are sharp disagreements on how to get there.

There are multiple pathways to this shared goal, but the most vital point is urgency. The threat is too great not to take action now.

States need to overcome their differences in approaches and find a common path to nuclear disarmament.

To close the gap between States will require determined efforts, flexibility, creativity and, above all, sustained commitment.

I count on all of you present here today to help us with your intellectual leadership to stimulate real and genuine debate among member states.

Ladies and gentlemen

I would like to close by asking something of you, the audience, and, in particular, the young amongst you.

Just as he has been committed to disarmament, Secretary-General Ban is a strong believer in empowering youth. He has enacted programmes for youth employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, and global citizenship education. For this purpose, he appointed the first ever special advisor on youth, who also the youngest ever special advisor.

On nuclear disarmament, the Secretary-General recognises the important role to be played by young people. As he said, “I especially count on young people to press their leaders for action. And I really count on young people to raise your voice. You are not Ministers, you are not Ambassadors or any government officials, or delegates, but you have a prerogative to raise your voice.”

You are the people who will be most affected by the action or lack of action taken by today’s world leaders. Therefore, you have a direct stake. You must bring pressure to bear on your political leaders in realising a world free of nuclear weapons.

In many ways you understand this technological world far better than anyone here on stage, I suppose. Through social media and other transformative technology, you have a global audience at your fingertips. You can educate them about the dangers of nuclear weapons and make them strong global advocates.

I want to ask you one more thing. When you complete your studies and choose what to do next, please consider how you can serve a cause for the common good of humanity. I can say

from my personal experience that nothing provides a greater sense of fulfilment than the global public service.

We can't be prouder of ourselves than when we know what we are doing represents universal values and protects the rights of all.

Ladies and gentlemen

Less than two weeks ago, at the UN, 175 countries signed the Paris Agreement to combat the existential threat of climate change, setting the record for the largest ever signing ceremony.

Now is the time to set another record on tackling the other existential threat to humanity: nuclear weapons.

Achieving a world free of nuclear weapons is a challenging task. But if we work together and join hands together, nothing is impossible.

I thank you.