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”Ensuring full implementation of the NPT”

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I want to thank the Global Security Institute and the Middle Powers Initiative for including me in this forum. I believe our discussion will be interesting.

First, let me just make it clear that I do not speak today for the WMDC as such – for the commissioners or for their chairman Hans Blix. Nor do I speak in my earlier capacity as a Swedish ambassador. I represent only myself today.

Minister Hobbs, Ambassador Meyer and Dr. Rauf have taken up several of the critical developments that have marked the period after the NPTRC in 2000, and especially during the latest 12 or 18 months, roughly. Not only has the first large counterproliferation war occurred – but also different kinds of diplomatic non-proliferation efforts, notably with Libya, with Iran, and with North Korea. These efforts range from very successful to so far unsuccessful. Furthermore, an enormous clandestine procurement network masterminded by Pakistani scientists has been exposed.

On the side of legal possessors of nuclear weapons – during the same period – most of the eight states which actually possess usable nuclear weapons have made clear that they plan to continue to do so. At the same time, most of them tell all other states not to do so. The norms are alive and well.

Seen from the normative side, a significant development occurred when the ban on United States’ low-yield nuclear weapons research and development was repealed by Congress at the request of the Administration. That may be the first sign of a possible reversal of an otherwise partly positive normative trend in recent years.

What do these developments tell us?

First, I believe it is clear that nuclear non-proliferation norms are quite strong. The urge to have weapons is also strong among some very few states, but the norms against acquiring them is for the most part even stronger.

Second – the norms against using nuclear weapons are not only strong, but extremely strong. Just imagine – the first use since 1945 of nuclear weapons as an instrument of war would be an event of incomprehensible proportions, the start of a new era – a disastrous historical event in front of our eyes.

It is disturbing, therefore, that from both sides of the spectrum, both legal possessors and possible breakouts, there are statements indicating that the old-style large-scale deterrence – nuclear weapons deterring only nuclear weapons – may be giving way to thoughts about actually using nuclear weapons for distinct purposes – even non-strategic purposes.

Let me make clear here, when I mention both ends of the spectrum, that in my view it is clearly much less alarming if a democracy possesses nuclear weapons than if a one-party state or a dictatorship does. But nevertheless, the two ends in fact connect, to a vicious circle. They do, because it will not hold up in the long run to pursue complete restraint for some while at the same time widening one's own options and doctrines of use. It is not credible as a line of argumentation, but more importantly, it will not work, given that incentives in national security are what they are.

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Our headline today is "ensuring full implementation" of the NPT. But let me turn this around a little. To achieve full implementation, some time in the future, we must first stop the erosion, the undermining, of the treaty. And that is coming from several directions.

The breakouts were more serious than we knew. North Korea, Libya, and earlier Iraq have made deliberate, sustained efforts, with middle-men, brokers and obscure companies supporting; and Iran has at least violated the NPT. Diplomacy is the answer to all of this, and has already been partly successful. Wars of counterproliferation will not be the answer that works in the future.

The nuclear Wal-Mart was worse than we had anticipated. It can be contained, but it will be a difficult task, given that the flow of information and technology is so much greater than before. It nevertheless has to be done.

The regime is undermined also from the other side. When the NPT was extended indefinitely – a difficult decision which required a very sensitive balance of undertakings – the nuclear-weapon-states agreed to put a comprehensive test ban and a fissile material cut-off in place. Nine years later, this is far from done – very far from done. These two necessary treaties are even distant today. This undermines the NPT and the nuclear non-proliferation norms.

Erosion may also result from other unfortunate, more recent, developments: one is the perceived increased value of nuclear weapons that is advertised – indirectly, at least – through budgetary allocations and plans for new types of weapons, designed not primarily for strategic deterrence, but to actually be used in specific situations in future conflicts. This signals more reliance, instead of less, on nuclear weapons and thereby goes against one of the agreements (the "diminishing role") from the 2000 review of the treaty – which also was a balanced package meeting the interests of all states.

Another such development seems to be the statements made to the effect that nuclear weapons will deter the use of chemical or biological weapons, and that they might even be used in retaliation against such weapons. These are dangerous thoughts – they lead logically to

operational value being given to nuclear weapons, and they constitute a stimulus to further acquisition – again, undermining the regime.

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If these trends can be reversed, we can start thinking seriously about full implementation. About the long run I am somewhat optimistic, myself, even if I don't sound like that right now. If the test moratorium holds, and if intensified diplomacy can work out tenable agreements with not only Iran, which seems to be within reach, but also North Korea, which is much more difficult, then I believe the norms will still be quite strong and can be further strengthened over time.

To strengthen norms, it is imperative in the medium and long term to diminish the incentives for acquiring nuclear weapons. That is, we must get much closer to solving the perennial regional problems in the Middle East, on the Korean peninsula and in South Asia. And we must diminish the potential of nuclear weapons, that is, render them unusable – which by and large they already are.

In almost all of these areas and issues, United States is the leading power. Therefore, all in all, the single most important development at the present time for the full implementation of the NPT would be if the United States, as a democratic, responsible, dominant power would take the lead, and lead by example.

I suggest that we all strive to adjust our thinking and our doctrines to the following two notions – I almost said, to the following two "facts":

One – democratic states can never use nuclear weapons first. And two – nuclear weapons are unusable weapons.

Thank you.