

“There has not been a policy moment like this in a very long time on as grand of a scale, but the moment is finite, and an urgent action is needed to ensure that it will not be missed”, - Mr. Joseph **Cirincione**, President of the Ploughshares Fund.

Throughout the Cold War, the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union kept the threat of nuclear war always at a high level. After the fall of the Soviet Union and into the first decade of the twenty-first century, nuclear terrorism has become the nightmare scenario. To confront the dangers of nuclear weapons, members of the international community drafted and signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on July 1, 1968. This treaty created the “grand bargain” that would regulate the conduct of nuclear and non-nuclear states: those states that possessed nuclear weapons would strive to actively engage in disarmament, and those who did not would pledge to uphold the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. All states would have guaranteed access to peaceful uses of nuclear power.



The fortunes of NPT have ebbed and flowed over the past 40 years. However, the immediate past had not been a positive period for the treaty, and many experts saw the 2005 NPT Review Conference as a failure. Nevertheless, the election of President Obama, and the events of April 2009 have infused the international community with excitement. The Joint Obama-Medvedev Statement issued 1 April 2009 clearly stated that both the United States and Russia would work quickly to replace the expiring Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) that is expiring in December 2009, and declared their shared vision was to have a world without nuclear weapons. This rhetoric was followed by President Obama’s speech in Prague on 5 April 2009, which reaffirmed many points made in the Joint Statement, and expanded on the next practical steps that should be taken in order to drastically reduce existing stockpiles as well as tighten non-

proliferation measures. Certainly, the first week of April 2009 may turn out to be one of the most significant points in the process towards a nuclear-free world.

It was in this environment of optimism and hope for the future that the GCSP hosted a public discussion entitled “Nuclear Non-proliferation: Time for Critical Decisions” on 20 April 2009. On the panel to discuss the implications of the recent policy statements of the United States and Russia, as well as the upcoming NPT 2010 Review Conference were Ambassador Sergio de Queiroz **Duarte**, the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament, and Mr. Joseph **Cirincione**, President of the Ploughshares Fund and Former Vice-President for National Security at the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C. The panel was chaired by Dr. Vladimir A. **Orlov**, President of the Center for Policy Studies (Russia), Editor-in-Chief of the Security Index Journal and President of the *Centre Russe d'Etudes Politiques, Genève*, who provided skilful guidance for the discussion.

Prior to the commencement of the panel's talk, a welcome address was delivered by Ambassador Dr. Jürg **Streuli**, The Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament, and the Treasurer of the GCSP Foundation Council. Ambassador Streuli began his address with the same points of optimism taken from the events of the first week of April. He was hopeful about the chances of a comprehensive and legally-binding treaty to cut down nuclear arsenals being put in place by the end of this year. If this would happen, Ambassador Streuli was confident that it would be a significant step towards achieving global consensus among other nations to slow down the process of building more nuclear weapons, as well as discourage other states from starting down the path towards acquiring nuclear weapon programmes. Instead, Ambassador Streuli envisioned that the new US-Russian treaty would set the foundation towards a new multilateral disarmament process.

In conclusion, Ambassador Streuli acknowledged that there were still a number of challenges to be faced. The recent missile launch by North Korea, and the seemingly relentless pursuit of acquiring nuclear weapons by Iran are two real threats that the international community must deal with. Another challenge is the current non-universality of NPT, which requires the participation of all states in order to remain effective. Nevertheless, despite these unsolved problems, Ambassador Streuli reiterated the fact that a definite window of opportunity has opened for taking significant steps in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and hoped that it would be possible one day to look back and say that 2009 marked the path towards a nuclear-free world, and put the multilateral disarmament machinery back on track.

After Ambassador Streuli finished his address, Dr. Orlov contextualised the debate and set out the parameters for the ensuing discussion. While hopeful that a new treaty between the US and Russia would be finalised by late 2009, Dr. Orlov cautioned that this first step would witness only a modest reduction in the number of nuclear weapons. The next steps after this will be much harder, and involve a significantly larger amount of negotiation and political will in order to achieve. Furthermore, the upcoming 2010 NPT Review Conference in New York needs to be much more successful than the previous one in 2005 in order to

expand the responsibility of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation from US-Russia bilateral relations to the international stage. Finally, Dr. Orlov stated that arms control was just one aspect of the nuclear question, and was eager to see how the discussion could be enlarged so as to include other points such as the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the weaponisation of Outer Space.



With this framework in mind, Dr. Orlov invited Ambassador Duarte to begin his presentation. Ambassador Duarte admitted that the title of the public discussion, the “time for critical decisions” on nuclear non-proliferation, was apt, and that these critical decisions called for critical thinking. He emphasised the current need for taken a close look at the adequacy and effectiveness of efforts to achieve a global non-proliferation regime. Regarding the “grand bargain” of the NPT, Ambassador Duarte encouraged policymakers in the international community to reflect back and think about what else would need to be achieved in order to successfully implement the bargain. More than anything else, Ambassador Duarte stressed the need to delineate a comprehensive and feasible agenda for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The 2005 conference, for which Ambassador Duarte presided as President, failed primarily because of a lack of timely agreements on the agenda. Furthermore, the history of the NPT shows that the general agreements most countries share on the fundamental goals break down once the discussion shifts towards the means towards achieving them. Nevertheless, Ambassador Duarte made it clear that the basic provisions of the NPT were still overwhelmingly supported by most countries around the world.

Regarding the challenges faced by the NPT, Ambassador Duarte classified them into external, internal, and technological categories. One strong challenge coming from outside of the NPT is the difficulty in making the treaty

universal. Currently, there are four countries outside of the treaty, and it is unlikely that any of these four shall be joining the treaty in the near future. Ambassador Duarte noted that these non-signatories have sharply destabilised the movement towards non-proliferation and disarmament, and focussed especially on the regions of the Middle East and South Asia as those most affected by NPT non-membership. In addition, the relationship between parties and non-parties of the NPT are further complicated when NPT signatories see non-parties granted economic incentives while they are subject to stricter economic controls. This, Ambassador Duarte feared, could lead to these parties reconsidering the role of the NPT and the value of their membership. However, Ambassador Duarte did not believe that an exodus from the NPT was imminent, nor that the regime would collapse in the future, as the fact remained that an overwhelming majority of states in the world had no interest in pursuing nuclear weapons.

The relations among states within the NPT also need to be strengthened and systematised. Ambassador Duarte believed that review processes needed to be more thorough, as doubts exist about the integrity of the declaration of weapon stockpiles by member states. Furthermore, the NPT is undermined through resistance from the nuclear states regarding inspections, and by their declarations regarding the need to maintain a “contagious doctrine of nuclear deterrence.” This failure of nuclear states to adapt enhanced safeguards accentuate the differences between the nuclear and non-nuclear states within the treaty.

Finally, Ambassador Duarte stressed the need for the treaty to adapt to the technological changes of the twenty-first century. With a larger amount of states acquiring nuclear capabilities, the question of nuclear fuel sourcing and disposal remains a key concern for world security. Despite efforts to establish fuel-supply guarantees, no consensus has yet been reached on the subject. Ambassador Duarte believed that solutions such as a global nuclear fuel bank should be pursued further in order to guarantee that the use of nuclear fuel conformed to Article Four of the NPT delineating the inalienable right to peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Most importantly, Ambassador Duarte warned that the gravest challenge would be to try and amend or renegotiate the “grand bargain” of the NPT, or to try and convert its harmonic balance between non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use into a sequential path. This, in Ambassador Duarte’s opinion, would be a foolhardy approach that would necessitate the existence of “nirvana on Earth” before it could be properly implemented, and would be the death sentence for both disarmament and the NPT. Indeed, the only path towards a nuclear-free world would be to implement the “grand bargain” rather than attempting to change its contingencies.

Overall, Ambassador Duarte believed realistically that global disarmament would not occur overnight, and nor would it be achieved without the prior achievement of other things. Disarmament would only occur once nuclear states felt confident that they could achieve their security aims without them. In order to build this confidence, an effective NPT regime would have to be implemented,

resting on the pillars of verification, irreversibility, transparency and legal authority. Ambassador Duarte harkened the NPT “grand bargain” to the organs of a human being; in order for a human to live, all organs must work together and in harmony. Therefore, the interconnected of the NPT would be a key ingredient in convincing nuclear states that their weapons would no longer be needed in the future.

In conclusion, Ambassador Duarte restated that the overwhelming majority of states in the world had no interest in pursuing nuclear weapons. Furthermore, he took heart that the statements from the United States and Russia could provide for future disarmaments under Article 6 of the NPT after the prolongation of START expected to take place in late 2009. However, Ambassador Duarte once again stressed the holistic nature of the treaty. The United States would take a major step forward by ratifying the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and would send a clear message to the world by actively engaging in significant disarmament. Disarmament would be the only way to send a message that the NPT was universal and non-discriminatory, and it would also offer the greatest security for no future use of nuclear weapons. It is the commitment to disarmament that gives the NPT its moral foundation and practicality, and therefore would be the only defensible and preventable strategy of non-proliferation. Thus, the most critical decision to be taken in the coming year according to Ambassador Duarte is that of proceeding with global disarmament.

After Ambassador Duarte completed his presentation, Dr. Orlov invited Mr. Joseph Cirincione to speak. Mr. Cirincione agreed with the sentiments of Ambassador Streuli and Ambassador Duarte and acknowledged that there had not been a policy moment like this in a very long time on as grand of a scale, but also cautioned that this moment was finite, and that urgent action was needed to ensure that it would not be missed. Mr. Cirincione then delineated the changes that had taken place in the nuclear policy of the United States, citing the explicit policy statements that had been made, the people who were behind the statements, and the commitment of President Obama to nuclear disarmament. On all levels, Mr. Cirincione found reasons to be optimistic that a breakthrough on disarmament could be achieved by the end of the year.

Mr. Cirincione first deeply engaged with the policy statements of the United States and Russia which were released at the beginning of April. Both the Joint Obama-Medvedev Statement and President Obama’s Prague Speech were striking in their language and tone, as well as the inclusion of words that had previously not appeared in the nuclear-related documents of the United States. These documents were a substantial change from those issued by the previous Bush Administration, which had focused more on dry goals and “checking off the boxes” of disarmament. By contrast, the language of these statements was easy to understand and sincere in its tone, and offered a different framework of interpretation. Instead of focussing on the existence of third-party nuclear arsenals in the world, the United States and Russia identified their own personal responsibility in bringing forth an atmosphere conducive for disarmament. As the two countries own more than 90% of the estimated 23,000 nuclear weapons

existing in the world, it was refreshing for them to display a candid approach to their own obligations regarding disarmament, and to posit a number of concrete steps for the immediate future.

Mr. Cirincione expected that the result of the talks would be to have draft proposals in place by July 2009, as well as a possible work plan for the replacement of the START treaty. This would lead to a lower level of operationally deployed nuclear weapons, with the given number expected to be around 1500. Mr. Cirincione however acknowledged that a number of policymakers hoped to reduce the number even further, to 1000 or remarkably only 500 operational nuclear weapons. Such drastic reductions make it clear that both parties recognise that the time has come to go beyond words and begin the process of drafting real policy.

Furthermore, Mr. Cirincione underscored the significance of President Obama's Prague Speech as reaffirming the commitments that had been put forth in the Joint Statement. The ideas in this speech were not simply a new iteration of policy, but had been a cornerstone of Obama's nuclear policy during his candidacy for the Presidency. The speech therefore was a translation of these campaign promises into a cohesive policy, with a clearly articulated practical plan.

President Obama's plan for disarmament includes three elements: reduction, prevention and security. First, President Obama wishes to reduce of the role of nuclear weapons in the security policy of the United States, and to establish a global bank for nuclear fuel material. On prevention, the plan calls for a greater emphasis on non-proliferation, with increased inspections held, as well as greater resources being placed in the hands of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Specifically, President Obama's plan also calls for concerted global action in containing and engaging with the regimes of North Korea and Iran. Finally, the plan calls for enhanced global security against nuclear terrorism by building a cooperative threat reduction programme. President Obama has also called for the convening of a global summit on nuclear security in take place in 2009, where those inside and outside the NPT framework would be brought to the same table to discuss concrete measures and try to create greater transparency in declaring nuclear inventories. Overall, Mr. Cirincione believes that this plan creates a comprehensive roadmap that clearly outlines the steps to be taken in the coming months.

Regarding the Obama Administration's personnel in charge of undertaking nuclear disarmament, Mr. Cirincione expressed his approval of those appointed to positions of responsibility. The appointment of leading experts and personalities such as Susan Rice as UN Ambassador, Joe Biden as Vice-President (who shall be in charge of the drive to get the CTBT ratified in the Senate), and the creation of a new Office of the Coordinator for the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism, demonstrates the commitment of this administration to utilise the best minds available in order to create a successful disarmament regime. The administration also includes a number of personalities who strongly believe in the ability of the world to one day exist without nuclear weapons. For example, Dr. Ivo Daalder, the new US Ambassador to NATO,

published an important article in the November/December 2008 issue of *Foreign Affairs* entitled "The Logic of Zero" in which he put forth his belief in the possibility of a complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Other less well-known but equally important appointees such as Steve Kosiak (Office of Management of the Budget), Ellen Tauscher (Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security) and John Holdren (Science Adviser) were enthusiastically supported by Mr. Cirincione. Overall, while all members of the administration may not be as idealistic to believe that a world without nuclear weapons is possible, the fact that such people have a strong voice in the administration means that their ideas will be heard and debated among others to create a vibrant and diverse pool of expert opinion from which policy will be formulated.

Finally, Mr. Cirincione outlined President Obama's personal commitment to nuclear disarmament. Already as a Senator, President Obama took a keen interest in the process, seeking out Senator Richard Lugar, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and joining him on a visit to Russia. President Obama also, together with Senator Chuck Hagel, crafted the Obama-Hagel Provision Aimed at Preventing Nuclear Terrorism, what Mr. Cirincione described as one of the most farsighted documents ever passed in the Senate on non-proliferation. Finally, and most tellingly, in his interview with TIME Magazine in January 2009, upon receiving TIME's Person of the Year award, President Obama cited nuclear proliferation along with the global economic crisis, the Afghanistan and Pakistan Conflict, and climate change as the main challenges that "keep him awake at night." Thus, Mr. Cirincione was more optimistic than ever on a near-term transformational change in policy under the Obama Administration.

After Mr. Cirincione concluded his speech, Dr. Orlov invited audience members to ask questions. Throughout the session, audience members posed diverse and challenging questions to the panellists, such as the state of American public opinion towards nuclear disarmament, the possible revival of START II in the framework for the new bilateral treaty expected to be finalised between Russia and the United States, the state of other aspects of nuclear non-proliferation such as the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty and the militarisation of outer space, the state of the American strategic missile defence system proposed for Poland and the Czech Republic and finally thoughts on the US-Indian Nuclear Deal that passed in 2008. Such a diverse and complex set of issues presented a more sober assessment regarding the forthcoming challenges that still had yet to be discussed and negotiated upon at the upcoming 2010 NPT Review Conference. Indeed, despite the positive mood created by the recent statements from the United States and Russia, the amount of work still to be done is significant. However, all members of the panel, in countering these complex questions from the audience, stressed the importance of the current atmosphere in helping to reduce some of these perceived barriers in order to create policy breakthroughs. While the road ahead is long, all panellists believed that with the presence of enough political will, the willingness of all parties to listen and understand the positions of each other, and the determination to translate lofty phrases into serious policy, many of the

multifaceted and controversial topics could be negotiated and agreed upon in the future. Thus in the end, the most important thing that the panellists strove to communicate to the audience was that the positive atmosphere of the present situation should not be squandered, as it presents the best chance of implementing a successful non-proliferation and disarmament regime for the future.



Source:

http://www.gcsp.ch/e/meetings/Security_Challenges/WMD/Public_Disc/2009/nuclear_nonproliferation_summary.htm

More than a hundred diplomats, journalist and experts accredited in Geneva as well as students of GCSP courses followed the discussions.

During these days, the public speaking Mr. Tariq **Rauf**, Deputy Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); Dr Harald **Müller**, Director of the Frankfurt Peace Research Institute, member of the PIR Center Research Council and Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Ali Asghar **Soltanieh** took place in Geneva.

Vladimir Orlov, President of PIR Center held discussions with T. Rauf, H. Müller and A. Soltanieh on the nuclear non-proliferation issues.