Concluding Remarks

Speaker: Admiral L. Ramdas (Ret.), Pakistan-India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy

Mr President, distinguished delegates and friends, I feel greatly honoured to be given this opportunity to have the last word as it were! My only hope and prayer is that whatever my colleagues have tried to put across to you, and which I will in my own way reinforce, will leave a lasting impression on your minds. Here as you all sit to deliberate, shape and determine the destinies of millions of fellow human beings, do please remember that many of them rely entirely on your foresight and wisdom for their survival. You are going to be either the makers or the breakers of their hopes and aspirations for a world free from war, hunger, poverty, and dehumanisation. Whilst most of us present here have been fortunate and benefited from the magic of science and technology, the same science and technology - in the present context- has also demonstrated the misery it can bring to humanity and the environment. We therefore have to give expression to the need of the hour, which very simply put is to run down nuclear weapons to zero and recycle these huge budgets in the areas where it is most needed - human security.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1) and John F Kennedy had expressed a hope that with the successful implementation of nuclear and conventional disarmament we could see an end to war. That is a dream that needs to be fulfilled.

We have heard many learned speakers each telling us how much has been achieved along the road to disarmament and non proliferation. Reasons have also been put forward for their inability to achieve complete nuclear disarmament. To quote Ms Madeleine Albright the Secretary of State, “Unfortunately none of us has it within our power to create overnight the conditions in which complete nuclear disarmament is possible. But in our own regions, and in our own ways, we each have a contribution to make.” It would be a great help if the conditions which need to be present to enable complete nuclear disarmament could be spelt out more explicitly, so that the world community could work towards that objective. However if this means that the world must arrive at a state of “complete peace and equilibrium” then it would appear to be yet another ploy to retain the nuclear weapons in perpetuity. I sincerely hope that I am wrong in making this assumption.

The Enemies of Disarmament

Some of the more important enemies of disarmament are:

- Culture of Violence, Militarism and Mindsets
- Military Industrial Complex
- Political Will or the lack of it

Culture of Violence, Militarism and Mindsets

The glorification of violence, war and militarism which is ingrained in the child from the very beginning, be it in the toys, cartoons, movies, or sounds - all go towards brainwashing a kid in a very subtle way. This form of exposure is further strengthened in later years by the education system which continues this process. The free accessibility to guns and their usage, and the damaging impact on a child’s psyche all contribute towards cultivating a culture of violence. Is it then surprising that when these children finally
emerge as leaders they are only talking of winning fights and wars! There is something fundamentally wrong here. There is therefore urgent need to transform these mindsets, and this can only happen if the culture of war and violence is converted to a culture of peace and harmony as advocated by the Hague Appeal for Peace and Justice for the 21st century. Mr Kofi Annan could not have put it better when addressing the UN Committee on Disarmament in Oct 1998, “It is sometimes said that weapons do not kill - but people do.” The challenge therefore is to address these mindsets and to turn this century around from one of continuing violence to one of constant peace. To achieve this we also need to handle the influence and pressures that are brought to bear by the Military Industrial Complex (MIC) on the policy and decision makers in Governments.

The Global Military Industrial Complex

There is no doubt that the overarching pressures of the Military Industrial Complex (MIC), has been in many ways responsible for creating new ghosts, new enemies and new frontiers. NATO, which was created to counter communist expansionism in Europe, lost justification for its continued existence at the end of the cold war in 1990. NATO countries incidentally share the lions share of the worlds defence budget. Namely 58.64%. (2) The principal exporters of arms also happen to be the leading industrialised countries, namely the five nuclear weapon states and Israel. The share of the exports to the world’s armament market in percentage terms is as follows. USA 51%, U.K. 13%, Russia 12%, France 10 %, Israel 7%, China 5 %, and Others 2%. Small wonder then that the NATO was rejuvenated with new found enemies and so called “rogue” states to contend with world wide. The sudden expansion of the role of NATO was therefore understandable as indeed one learned the boundaries of the Atlantic Ocean! The “right conditions” may never come if the MIC is going to be permitted to create new enemies all the time. The reason for this pressure from the 700 billion dollar MIC is not too difficult to understand. So all of us who want an end to wars and weapons must bear in mind that, in addition to the loss of profits and jobs, this hits at the root of the personal security of the industrialists, politicians, military and the middlemen. Therefore to make this happen one needs to discuss this across the board with all participants where measures like collective security, education, training for peace, and development needs can be addressed. Only then such initiative are likely to arrest the burgeoning pressures of the MIC.

Political Will or lack of it

This is a subject which has always been commented upon by many observers, analysts statesmen and others. It is not hard to see why there are no politicians who comment on this. What does it take to be a statesman and a pragmatist, and not a classical politician. Politicians tend to become captives of their own creation, usually the bureaucratic baggage which more often than not inhibits freedom of maneuver. Yet there are outstanding cases in history where dynamic statesmanship has enabled dramatic things to happen. In recent times the “realpolitik” of Willy Brandt or the glasnost and perestroika of Gorbachev are examples. We need more statesmen with a political will to take us to total nuclear disarmament. Ladies and Gentlemen this is the time and here is your chance.

New Dilemmas

- The NMD requirement projected by the USA has created new challenges. The reversal of the ABM treaty in any form at this stage is certainly going to upset the very fabric of stability this treaty has provided so far. This will no doubt trigger an arms race with all its attendant fallout.
- The emergence of new and revised nuclear doctrines. The doctrine of first use by Russia is not a healthy development.
- The problems of Nuclear waste management and its disposal, and the attendant ill effects on health and the environment needs integrated planning and monitoring.
The Way Ahead

- Nuclear Disarmament must not be viewed in isolation. We need to formulate an integrated strategy which addresses the core issue of nuclear disarmament, together with those concerning war and violence. A strategy which extends from non-first use and de-alerting at one end to that of creating a new culture of peace at the other. This indeed is the program of the Hague Appeal for Peace.
- To identify and “create the conditions in which complete disarmament is possible”- Madeleine Albright. Hopefully this will not be the ideal conditions that I had mentioned earlier, which will help retain nuclear weapons in perpetuity.
- Engage all the players involved with the MIC to evolve a strategy for conversion of Defence industries to more productive and people oriented sectors. Considering that such a reallocation of resources will liberate and enable over half the world population to join the consumer market the advantage of this is self evident. The money to be made here will far outstrip the existing $700 billion MIC by many a mile.
- Stop creating new ghosts, new enemies and new threat perception techniques.

Conclusion
Notwithstanding how we view this challenge – politically, economically, militarily, legally, ethically or morally - “we the people” demand that the decision makers do not hijack the entire planet to meet vested interests. We must set before us a time table to meet targets along the nuclear disarmament route to zero. The disarmament of conventional weapons including small arms must also be discussed concurrently. There may be no better opportunity than now to give expression to the many good things that we have said in the past, continue to say at the present and no doubt will do so in the future. This is the challenge before us. Hopefully all of us will have the vision, the commitment and the courage to meet it.

I would like to end by quoting Mahatma Gandhi who had this to say about the atomic bomb.

“The only moral which can be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it shall not be destroyed by counter bombs. Violence cannot be destroyed by counter violence.”
-Mahatma Gandhi- Pune 1946

Note 1. Jawaharlal Nehru’s speeches Sep ‘46-May’49 (Min. of Information and Broadcasting), cited in George Perkovich’s book on “India’s Nuclear Bomb” p. 14

Note 2. This includes USA’s defence expenditure which is 38.4% of the world’s total. IDSA, “Asian Strategic Review” 1998-1999.