



Address to the Conference on Disarmament

by

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Mr President,

There is a particular resonance for me in speaking here today in this Council Chamber which was constructed to house the League of Nations. Ireland's security policy was born out of our experience of the League of Nations. Having joined the League as a small, newly independent country, we came to believe that our security could best be assured through an effective system of collective security which sought to prevent conflict and which should be resolute in addressing aggression. Regrettably, by the time this building was completed, the organisation it had been built to accommodate had been unable to prevent the descent into global war.

The new multilateral system which arose in 1945, based upon the United Nations, while imperfect, has had greater success and can lay claim to greater legitimacy in upholding respect for the rule of law in relations between states. Ireland has been a strong supporter of the role of the United Nations in conflict prevention and in peace-keeping. Recent events have demonstrated the limitations and weakness of the Organisation. They have also demonstrated the unique legitimacy that the United Nations brings to the pursuit of international peace and security. We cannot do without it.

The Conference on Disarmament can have an important role to play in the UN efforts to maintain international peace and security. Ireland's approach to disarmament is rooted in a firm conviction that multilateral cooperation is in the interest of all and most particularly serves the interests of smaller states who, lacking military power must rely on building and supporting a strong rules-based system. We have placed our faith in the multilateral regime of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements. We are committed to implementing and strengthening these instruments and to pursuing the universalisation of their norms.

The European Union, over which Ireland is honoured to preside at present, has put a commitment to effective multilateralism at the centre of its Common Foreign and Security Policy. A rules-based international order and strong international institutions are of fundamental importance to the Union.

Effective Multilateralism means a commitment to work with others to resolve the root causes of conflict, to promote respect for human rights and to create the machinery for resolving difference by peaceful means. Disarmament and arms control are essential elements in conflict prevention, in mitigating the impact of war and in addressing the problems of post-conflict situations.

Mr President

Ireland's own experience of conflict has taught us that so-called conventional weapons cause terror, misery and suffering. Our experience is mirrored in many other situations which testify even more emphatically to the damage resulting from the trade in small arms and light weapons. Progress in dealing with the misuse of these weapons will be slow but it must be given greater priority. The negotiations which

will get underway this summer on tracing and marking of small arms and light weapons should result in an agreement on a legally binding instrument to strengthen controls and to alleviate the devastating impact of these weapons worldwide.

Post conflict situations are frequently characterised by continuing casualties of war. Children, women and men going about their everyday business have too often become victims of landmines and other discarded remnants of war. Governments encouraged by the support of Civil Society have made progress in dealing with this issue. This year we commemorate the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines. Later this year the Nairobi Review Conference will provide an opportunity to take stock of the progress that has been made and will enable us to consider how to achieve universal respect for the principles and application of the Treaty.

In a difficult period for arms control the successful outcome of negotiations on an additional protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is greatly welcomed. Ireland was glad to have been able to organise a Conference on the topic of Explosive Remnants of War and Development in Dublin from 23-25 April last year. The agreement to address the Explosive Remnants of War represents a significant step forward and will hopefully provide momentum for other issues which need to be tackled in the CCW framework.

Mr President,

Conventional weapons may have killed far more people, but it is the proliferation and possible use of Weapons of Mass Destruction which causes greatest fear. Their potential to destroy our world demands more effective and urgent action towards their elimination. The international community must strengthen their efforts to prevent their further proliferation and the danger that these weapons could fall into the hands of terrorists.

Next month the preparatory committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will meet. In 1958 one of my predecessors, Frank Aiken, put forward a proposal for such a Treaty. When it was opened for signature Ireland was privileged to have been the first country to sign and to ratify the NPT. Since then efforts to strengthen the Treaty and to ensure respect for all its provisions has been our highest priority in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The NPT has been subjected to severe strains in recent years. Like others we deplore the announcement made by the DPRK to withdraw from the NPT last year. We continue to urge the DPRK to dismantle immediately any nuclear weapons programme in a visible and verifiable manner, to allow the return of IAEA inspectors, and to come into full and unconditional compliance with all relevant international obligations, in particular the NPT and their IAEA Safeguards Agreement.

Concerns have also arisen about the nuclear programmes of a number of other countries. The possession of nuclear weapons by States outside the NPT and non-

compliance with the Treaty's provisions by States Party to the Treaty risk undermining multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.

There is a tendency for some Members of the Treaty to stress its non-proliferation aspects to the neglect of the disarmament provisions of the NPT. I am firmly convinced that disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing. Above all we might consider that what does not exist cannot proliferate. The development of new types or new uses for nuclear weapons is unlikely to inspire a sense of confidence. On the contrary it suggests that the taboo on the use of such weapons could be weakened.

Preserving the integrity of the NPT means respecting all its provisions and the commitments freely undertaken at Review Conferences. The progress which can be achieved by the NPT States Parties, if there is sufficient political will, was evident in the conclusions of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference which provided a realistic blueprint for achieving nuclear disarmament. Ireland, together with our New Agenda Coalition partners, worked hard to achieve that outcome. The thirteen practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI were agreed by consensus and include an unequivocal undertaking by the Nuclear Weapons States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

A rules based system is one respected by all. A consensus agreement, such as the 2000 Final Document, imposes particular responsibilities and retains a particular legitimacy.

The 2000 Final Document also includes commitments on non-proliferation, including in the area of safeguards. The Conference specifically endorsed the measures of the Model Additional Protocol approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors. Ireland believes that an Additional Protocol is now an essential element of any effective safeguards regime. Ireland together with all other EU Member States has completed the necessary national measures for the entry into force of such Protocols. I would urge all States, regardless of the size or nature of their nuclear programme, which have not yet signed and ratified an Additional Protocol to do so. This would be an important demonstration of their commitment to the NPT.

There is a fundamental link between the objectives of the NPT and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty which was the last major agreement to be negotiated in this forum. Ireland continues to see the CTBT as one of the fundamental building steps on the road to nuclear disarmament. Eight years after its adoption by the UN General Assembly and despite the support of an overwhelming number of United Nations Member States, the Treaty has yet to secure the support required in order for it to enter into force.

Mr President,

In recognition of the dangers posed by Weapons of Mass Destruction, the European Union adopted a Strategy on the non-proliferation of such weapons at the European Council last December. We are agreed that non-proliferation should be mainstreamed into our overall policies drawing upon all the resources and instruments available to the Union. We are working to support the multilateral institutions charged with

verification and upholding compliance with the Treaties. Furthermore, we are committed to strong national and internationally-coordinated export controls as a necessary complement to the Treaty system.

Mr President,

Support for multilateral instruments must translate into support for effective compliance with their provisions. For this reason Ireland supports an effective compliance and verification instrument for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We recognise the work which has been done by the meetings of State Parties last year and welcome the focus on effective national measures to ensure full implementation of the provisions of the Treaty. As part of the EU Strategy on Weapons of Mass Destruction, we are working with our partners to secure the universalisation of the Treaty.

The Chemical Weapons Convention also provides for a ban on this category of weapons of mass destruction. The possible existence of chemical weapons in countries which are not party to the Convention is a source of concern and with our EU partners we will continue to promote the universalisation of the Convention.

Mr President

The Conference on Disarmament has made an outstanding contribution in the area of arms control and disarmament. The present inaction is in stark contrast to that proud past. Since joining the Conference in 1999 we have seen no work of any significance take place here.

The reasons for the impasse are obvious. A political consensus is lacking on the next steps to be taken in the multilateral arena on arms control and disarmament issues.

We should not permit our work here to be held hostage to any single issue. Yet it should be possible to find agreement which will reflect common concerns.

For our part, Ireland supports the establishment in the CD of a subsidiary body to deal specifically with the issue of nuclear disarmament. We believe that the CD should commence negotiations on a Treaty dealing with fissile material. We see merit in embarking on a process which could eventually lead to an agreement on the non-weaponisation of outer space. At the same time we are realistic and appreciate that this body is unlikely to start negotiations across a wide range of issues at the same time.

If this Conference cannot yet give expression to a political consensus on future negotiations, it surely can play a role in creating the shared understanding which must be the basis of any such consensus. Structured discussions on each item of the agenda of the Conference could build understanding of complex issues and appreciation of each others concerns. This can only lead to greater trust which must be the basis of any negotiation.

The Conference should also reflect on the relevance of its methods of work in today's world. I find it hard to believe, much less understand, how a body charged with a mandate of such relevance to humankind and drawing its funding from the United Nations can continue to effectively exclude Civil Society from a meaningful role in its deliberations. Nor can I understand the exclusivity with which the Conference guards its membership. While your membership includes some with modest engagement with multilateral disarmament treaties, others who are staunch upholders of the multilateral disarmament system are denied entry. Amongst the latter I would include Member States of the European Union and Accessing States whose admission has been blocked for many years.

The issue of legitimacy underpins respect for multilateral action. We must remember that if we want an effective multilateral system we must all contribute meaningfully to it. The multilateral system is about empowerment and ownership. We are all responsible for finding shared solutions and for playing our part in implementing them.

Thank you Mr President.