

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE TO THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Geneva, 24 January 2006

I send my best wishes to all Member States of the Conference on Disarmament as it opens its 2006 session. You meet at a time of heightened anxiety about a series of setbacks over the past year in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. An already weakened global disarmament machinery has been eroded yet further by the disappointing results of the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the impasse in the Conference on Disarmament and, not least, the absence of any reference to disarmament and non-proliferation in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit.

It is imperative that we draw lessons from these setbacks. I call on all States to reflect in earnest on the political sources of the crisis, and to agree on and implement concerted actions based on pragmatism and realism. You need to prove that the Conference is capable of carrying out its mandated role as the world's single negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament.

As last year's session made clear, the impasse cannot be broken by procedural means or by merely fine-tuning existing proposals. Capitals need to thoroughly reassess attitudes towards the Conference, and develop a new political consensus on priorities in arms control and disarmament. I also hope you will explore ways of making the Conference more effective as part of the overall efforts to reform the United Nations. I welcome the fact that you were able to hold substantive debates on the issues on your agenda, and on other issues relevant to the international security environment. Such debates are essential for fostering a consensus-building process, and I encourage you to make even more vigorous use of them this year. I am also encouraged that you have sustained and developed further the practice of having foreign ministers address the Conference. Such addresses can inject much-needed new ideas for revitalizing the Conference and help prepare the ground for new negotiations. I urge you to encourage your foreign ministers to address the Conference again this year.

Through its membership and accumulated experience, the Conference has an advantage over any other negotiating body in this field. I hope you will use that advantage, and demonstrate the vision, the political will and the patience required to restore confidence in the ability of the Conference to meet new challenges. In that spirit, I wish you a most productive session.