

US, 6 Feb 07

Statement to the Conference on Disarmament
By Ambassador Christina Rocca
U.S. Permanent Representative
February 6, 2007

Creating the Environment Necessary for Nuclear Disarmament

Madame President,

The agenda item we are dealing with is titled "Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament." The title of my remarks today, however, is "Creating the Environment Necessary for Nuclear Disarmament." I have chosen this title for a reason. The nuclear arms race ended 15 years ago. It ground to a halt with the end of the Cold War and since then we have seen a reduction in nuclear warheads by the chief Cold War protagonists on a scale unimaginable not so very long ago. The question before us, therefore, is not stopping a race that for most of us no longer exists. Rather, it is how we prevent the emergence of new regional nuclear arms races, and create the environment necessary to complete the process of nuclear disarmament.

For too long, many have taken the easy path of relegating all responsibility in this regard to the nuclear weapons states. That may be politically convenient, but it ignores the reality of the world in which we live today. The NPT never envisaged complete nuclear disarmament without regard to the international security environment. Indeed, just the opposite is true. The treaty wisely makes clear that complete nuclear disarmament is contingent on an improvement in the overall security environment. And in that regard, every State Party to the NPT has a responsible role to play in fulfilling the promise of Article VI.

In Article VI, States Parties committed themselves, among other things, to ending the nuclear arms race at an early date. Thankfully, this has been accomplished. Lest there be any doubts that the arms race between the nuclear superpowers is now over, or about our intentions, let me remind you where the United States is going and what it has accomplished since the end of the Cold War. By 2012, the U.S. nuclear stockpile will be reduced to nearly one quarter of what it was at the end of the Cold War, and U.S. operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads will be reduced to about one third of 2001 levels. These reductions include our most modern systems, the Peacekeeper ICBM, which has already been completely deactivated, and the removal from service of four Trident ballistic missile submarines. In all, over 1,000 strategic missiles and bombers and 450 ICBM silos have been eliminated.

We have now fully implemented the 1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiative by destroying the last of over 3,000 tactical nuclear warheads. We have down-blended 58 metric tons of highly enriched uranium (HEU) from our defense stockpile into reactor fuel. The United States and Russia have committed to convert a combined total of 68 metric tons (that is, 34 tons from each country) of weapon-grade plutonium into forms unusable for weapons, primarily by burning it as reactor fuel. Under a U.S.-Russian agreement, Russia has down-blended 292 metric tons of HEU from Russian weapons into reactor fuel. If one uses the IAEA values for "significant quantities" of nuclear material relevant to nuclear weapons, these initiatives would correspond to enough material to make over 20,000 nuclear weapons. The United States and Russia have agreed on shutting down weapons plutonium production reactors and, more recently, on dates for the shutdown of Russia's last three production reactors and replacing them with fossil fuel plants. The United States has provided funding for over 60,000 former Soviet weapons scientists to do peaceful commercial work. We have also assisted Russia in downsizing and securing its nuclear weapons complex in a manner Russia determined to be consistent with maintaining its own security. The assistance we have provided the states of the former Soviet Union has cost the people of the United States billions of dollars. On top of all this effort and expense to date, the U.S. Department of Energy has asked Congress to double its budget for nuclear weapon dismantlement, so that we can reduce the backlog of nuclear warheads awaiting elimination.

Numerically, the scale of disarmament by the United States and the former Soviet Union since the end of the Cold War is unparalleled in history.

Despite these accomplishments, there are those that say reductions are good, but the problem is a continuing reliance on nuclear weapons, albeit at lower numbers. Yet this too fails to grasp the essence of U.S. nuclear policy. The U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which the President approved in 2002, constituted a clean break from U.S. nuclear planning of the past, which relied on a strategic nuclear "Triad" of land, sea, and air-delivered nuclear weapons. The NPR established a blueprint for creating a new strategic Triad that indeed includes, but significantly no longer relies solely on, nuclear weapons. This new Triad consists of strike weapons, both nuclear and conventional, and kinetic and non-kinetic; active and passive defenses; a responsive defense infrastructure capable of responding to new and evolving threats; and improved command, control, intelligence and planning capabilities. Providing future U.S. Presidents with the strategic capabilities called for in the NPR will give those Presidents more information, more options, and more time to make critical decisions, thus raising the decision threshold for use of nuclear weapons. It was precisely the new thinking embodied in the NPR that allowed for the historic reductions we are continuing today. But the impact of the NPR goes beyond these current reductions in stating that even greater reductions in nuclear weapons should be possible once the new Triad is fully in place.

Nuclear weapons continue to have relevance in today's world, but that relevance is clearly not incompatible with the NPT. Indeed, until the countries of the world can create the environment necessary for nuclear weapons to be entirely eliminated—which is the ultimate aspiration of all NPT States Parties—the protection which the United States extends to its allies can actually slow nuclear proliferation and help make it less likely that new nuclear arms races will emerge. It is a historical fact that several national nuclear weapons programs were never initiated, or were halted, because security guarantees provided by a nuclear-armed United States convinced these states not to seek nuclear weapons. Today these guarantees play no small role in helping persuade some countries that they still do not need such capabilities, despite rising threats from states that have violated their NPT commitments by establishing covert nuclear weapons programs. In this respect, continuation of the U.S. nuclear umbrella is necessary under current circumstances in order to help lay the foundation for further progress in disarmament. Ultimately, however, the objective of all states should be to create an environment in which it is no longer necessary for anyone to rely upon nuclear weapons for security.

So, what is the environment necessary for ongoing reductions in nuclear weapons to continue to their logical conclusion? What kind of international security situation must exist? One could postulate that such a security situation includes clear and full compliance on the part of all states with their international obligations, particularly those under the NPT. It requires a world in which the community of nations works together to ensure that their territories do not provide safe haven for terrorists or the trafficking of WMD and the materials to produce them. Presumably there also would be some sort of assurances against reconstitution of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons capabilities, as well as the development of means by which any security requirements that might remain after nuclear disarmament could be met in non-nuclear military ways—if, indeed, such disarmament were to be contemplated prior to achievement of a treaty on general and complete disarmament. It certainly requires a world in which states do not see increases in their security as a zero sum equation requiring less security on the part of others. Fundamentally, we are talking about a world in which the lessening of international tension and the strengthening of international trust make it possible for us all to transcend the competitive military dynamics and concerns that have helped encourage reliance upon nuclear weapons to date. Such circumstances are not easy to achieve. But they are not unimaginable, and the NPT makes clear that all States Parties are committed to this ultimate goal.

Every state has a role to play in establishing this environment, both as sovereign national actors and through multilateral efforts. In confronting the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, the fundamental building block of success is national efforts to control the dangers of chemical,

biological, and nuclear weapons, and the delivery systems for such weapons. Multilateral institutions and multilateral instruments cannot by themselves substitute for the exercise by sovereign governments of their responsibility to prevent the proliferation of these weapons. Multilateral institutions and multilateral instruments can establish legal obligations and norms, provide assistance and encouragement to those requesting help to comply with these norms, and impose consequences for violations of the norms. But sovereign states ultimately have the responsibility and, in most cases, the capability to act to stem WMD proliferation.

Madame President,

The United States will continue to remove nuclear weapons from its deployed stockpile in accordance with our announced plan of reductions, even as we work with the international community to create the conditions for the realization of our shared objective of a nuclear weapon-free world. One area ripe for our collective effort is the rapid conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. While most of the nuclear weapons states long ago declared a moratorium on production, it is clear that complete and irreversible nuclear reductions cannot be achieved absent this measure becoming global. I urge my colleagues here to join me in a renewed effort to achieve a measure for which we all express support.

Thank you, Madame President.