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**SECOND PLENARY SESSION
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IN THE MIDDLE EAST
SATURDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2012**

Question & Answer Session

Questions and Answers

Camille Grand

Ariel, thank you very much for sharing the Israeli perspective with this view from Tel Aviv, and also for pointing at the current situation and the sense of a critical juncture associated with the issue we are talking about. Since the speakers have been reasonably disciplined, we have some time for questions.

Nabeela Al-Mulla, Ambassador of Kuwait, Brussels

I am the Ambassador of Kuwait here in Brussels and former Chairman of the Board of the IAEA. I have one remark for each of the panellists. Your Royal Highness, you spoke about openness, and that is a point that will have to be discussed further. We often speak in our region about *al amn wa al aman* – safety and security. We give some allowance to security but not enough attention is given to safety. I am talking about nuclear reactors that exist in our region, whether in Israel or Iran. My recommendations are the following for both situations: first, that the two countries join the Convention on Nuclear Safety, under which it is not mandatory that they give reports on the status of their nuclear reactors. One the latest converts to that convention was India. My second suggestion that could be taken further is to have stress tests. Let us have stress tests for the reactors that are in the region, with the help of our European partners or the IAEA. We saw these tests done here in Europe following Fukushima. For the sake of confidence-building, maybe we should have some of these tests done in the region.

My remark to Dr Kubbig is that I am little intrigued about his overemphasis on missiles. I appreciate that that point is included in the forthcoming convention, but the core problem remains weapons: first nuclear and then the others.

In terms of the comment that we cannot talk directly with each other, let me go back a while to the Arms Control & Regional Security Working Group (ACRS), where there was plenty of space to talk about arms control and regional security in the early 1990s.

Dr Aboul-Enein, I agree with many of the remarks that you made, but may I also add that adherence to current conventions, like the Test-Ban Treaty, could be one of the confidence-building measures taken by Israel and Iran, as well as Egypt.

Dr Levite, I agree with you on the importance of domestic order and that that is one of our concerns. Another concern is around where the weapons in Libya are in terms of accounting for them. Do you not think, however, that domestic order is also a point that Israel has to attend to in terms of the Palestinian question? I do not think that you will have a domestic order within Israel if the Palestinians do not have one. It is in the hands of the Israeli government. Thank you.

Harald Müller, Executive Director, PRIF; Vice Chair, EU Non-Proliferation Consortium

My question is directed to His Royal Highness. I was intrigued by your call for openness. We know that Israel has been practising the policy of opacity concerning its nuclear capability for a long time, not least with the concern that becoming open would increase pressure on Arab governments either to get equal with Israel or to confront it. Under the circumstances that were elaborated by Dr Aboul-Enein – namely the much stronger influence of the Arab people on their governments – I expect this fear to become even higher than it has ever been. What could the Arab side do to mitigate this Israeli concern in order to persuade Israel to be open, which would, of course, be a precondition for open discussions and negotiations on the zone?

Pierre Goldschmidt, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

My first question is to all the panellists. We are having a session here on the Middle East. What is your definition of 'the Middle East'? I ask that because, if you read how the IAEA has defined it, you will find included Mauritania and the Comoros, but not Turkey. I do not quite see the logic there, so I am asking whether Turkey is part of the Middle East or whether it is more important to include Mauritania and the Comoros in the definition.

I then have a comment on what Dr Aboul-Enein said. When, one day, hopefully, we have a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, it will mean most likely cross-inspection between countries. It will mean having Israelis inspecting in Iran, and Iranians inspecting in Israel. Before that takes place, we will have to wait some time. In your list of things that should take place, there is one that can be implemented without having Iran recognising the existence of Israel and without having two states – Palestine and Israel – living together under the peace process, and it can be done immediately. It was mentioned by Ambassador Al-Mulla: it is for the key states – Egypt, Israel, Iran and Syria – to sign and ratify the CTBT. You do not need to negotiate anything. It can be done within two weeks. What do you think about that?

Hans Blix, Director General Emeritus, IAEA

We are talking about the presence of weapons and doing away with them, but we must be aware that there is a fuse that leads to weapons. The fuse consists of two elements: the intention and the technical capability. Japan has a very short way to go to weapons but we trust that they do not have the desire to do so. Brazil is also close technically and is probably also not willing to do it. In the Middle East, we have Israel, which we all assume has nuclear weapons, and we have Iran, which has come very close to the technical ability and is suspected of having the will to go there. We must, in this discussion about freeing the Middle East of nuclear weapons, be aware of the Iranian situation. There was not so much discussion about Iran in the past – it was about Israel – and the thrust of the zone was originally Israeli weapons.

Today, however, the huge problem that may really lead to war is the building up of an enrichment capability by Iran. I agree with Mr Levite that we need to have constructive thinking before the Helsinki conference. It is really overwhelming. People are talking about bombs falling almost every day, so there is a short-term perspective and a longer-term perspective, and we hope that there will be a meeting in Istanbul and that the EU will play a big role there. I do not think that we can expect very much by way of retreat. The partners have boxed themselves in to tough positions, so we should look for things that can gradually ease the situation.

The worry at the moment is that Iran goes beyond 20% and does so at the Fordo plant, which, apparently, cannot be reached by bombs. Iran could help by simply saying, 'We continue to pursue the line that we have been pursuing before. We are members of the NPT and we stand by that. We have enriched uranium to 4% and 20% because we need it for different types of reactors. We will stay with that and we will keep the inspectors here'. That means that, if the inspectors are thrown out, it is a sign. If the Iranians were to increase the enrichment level to above 20%, that would be another sign. If they say that they continue as they do, that will inspire some confidence.

In the longer term, it is a totally different story. Some people see the zone as something very distant. We have talked for such a long time about a zone free of weapons but we must be aware of the fuse. That means that the zone must be something that comprises also the fuel cycle – the enrichment plants and the reprocessing plants. In the Korean situation, there was an agreement in the early 1990s that neither party would have any enrichment or reprocessing. We cannot impose such a thing from the outside, but Middle Eastern countries could agree between themselves that they will have neither reprocessing nor enrichment plants. That would be very difficult and would require the assurance of supply and an inspection system etc.

It would give Israel the assurance not only that Iran will have to dismantle its enrichment plant, but other countries in the region would have to commit not to have enrichment or reprocessing. It would require of Israel the sacrifice of doing away with their nuclear weapons as well as their reprocessing capability. People will laugh at that today, but I saw an opinion poll from Israel in which a majority of Israeli Jews said that they would prefer for no country in the Middle East to have nuclear weapons rather than two having them. It is something to aim for and, while I agree that Helsinki may be a starting point, it is time to get this discussion going.

Teng Jianqun, China Institute of International Studies

I would like to ask a question related to the situation in the Middle East to the distinguished panellists from EU and Arab countries. What lessons should we learn from Libya? At the very beginning of last year, Colonel Gaddafi wrote a letter to the UN Secretary-General saying that he was willing to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear project and have it return to the international community. Two months later, however, military intervention occurred, followed by the death of Colonel Gaddafi. What happened in Libya had a very negative and passive impact on the efforts of the international community in terms of non-proliferation. We have reached another crucial moment and some countries have already shown their willingness to use force against countries in the region, so what lessons should we learn from Libya? What can the EU and the Arab League do to prevent military interventions from happening?

Rebecca Johnson, Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, UK

I would like to thank the panellists for very interesting analyses and to ask all of you to give us some idea of what you would see as both a desirable and a feasible follow-up to the 2012 conference that could be taken forward.

Vladimir Orlov, PIR Center, Moscow

As Russia is one of the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution and initiated the discussion and what followed in terms of a conference, I wanted to give you a brief remark on an excellent panel. There is a glimpse of hope here on Venus compared to Mars. I was in Washington a few weeks ago, where there is a lack of interest in the 2012 conference. It is good that we have a panel and a discussion on this here. In Moscow, of course, it is seen as a very challenging but very important conference. Its absence or postponement would definitely mean significant damage to the NPT review process. It is not viewed as a one-time event; it should, hopefully, be a beginning of the process.

Perhaps more creative ideas will appear, but I will briefly list three points, without any details: first, it would be impossible to reach the initial stage in Helsinki in 2012 if we do not include an opportunity in the conference to provide for no use of force or no threat to use force against nuclear installations in the region. If that were the case, some countries would be absent from the conference, having no incentive to go. The second point is peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and I very much appreciate the Egyptian colleague who mentioned no restrictions if it meets NPT obligations – no more than that. We have to recognise that. The third point is transparency, and I really enjoyed His Royal Highness's comment on openness. Transparency and openness are probably more important here than for other regions.

This should be the minimal list that should be addressed at the first conference as part of the process, if it takes place.

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

In the Middle East, since 1973, we have been going through the step-by-step approach that Mr Kissinger instituted, and we have not reached any conclusions. The question was always crisis

management, not crisis resolution. On the question of nuclear weapons and WMD, we should go for resolutions rather than management. Imagine with me if, prior to the 2012 conference in Finland, the Security Council and particularly the P5 were to issue a resolution saying to everybody, 'We are going to establish a zone free of weapons in the Middle East', with the provisos that I mentioned in my presentation of the guarantees of a nuclear-security umbrella on one side and economic and technical aid to develop civilian uses of nuclear energy and, on the other side, diplomatic and economic sanctions as well as military sanctions, guaranteed by P5, against any country that is seen to be developing WMD.

That statement and that resolution would make it practically impossible for any country in the Middle East... and in answer to the question, I would say that the Middle East extends from Iran via Turkey to Mauritania, but does not necessarily encompass Mozambique and other African countries. That is an important declaration of intent on the part of the world community and particularly the P5. All of the other ancillary, technical and subsidiary arguments would be followed by the members of the zone, who will get together and develop it as it goes along, learning from other experiences, as Mr Aboul-Enein suggested, from the other nuclear- or WMD-free zones. There is a lot of huffing and puffing going on today about military strikes, sanctions and isolation. That huffing and puffing should be channelled towards establishing the zone. We can do it and it can be very practical, but all it needs is the willingness and the good intentions of the P5. I cannot see any of the P5 disagreeing on having such a zone.

On the Libyan example of military intervention, I do not think that the fact that Mr Gaddafi gave up his nuclear weapons had anything to do with the Libyan people's uprising against him. It was his own conduct with his own people that led to the revolution, and it went through the process that is very much established in the world community, which is to go through the UN Security Council for such an intervention in Libya.

The other point is that cross-inspections will become part of the WMD-free zone. In response to the gentleman who asked about Israel's concerns about Arab intentions and openness, I would reverse that and say that we in the Arab world are the ones who are concerned about Israel's openness and lack thereof. Having a zone free of WMD will be an equal balance between meeting the concerns of the Arab World, including Iran and Turkey, as well as of Israel. The peace process and the end of the conflict between Israel and its neighbours is an essential aspect of this scenario that I am talking about. Having the zone is not going to occur tomorrow. Once the P5 declare that intention, it will take negotiations. It is well deserving of all the efforts of the world community to give their full attention to the zone.

Bernd Kubbig

On the Libyan lesson, that is the core question. The regime in Iran will draw its own conclusions. Unless the US reduces its implicit and indirect regime-change policy, there will be no real solution. These kinds of policies stand in the way of reaching a WMD-free zone.

Secondly, missiles matter because, in a negotiation process, they are less emotionally loaded than nuclear weapons, for example. They can be brought into the process. In addition, they matter because, without them, nuclear weapons are sitting ducks. They do not fly. Thirdly, as Ariel Levite said, missiles – or rockets – destroy Israel and its way of living every day. While I excluded this aspect, it has to be part of the overall process. Missiles kill people almost every day and have been used in all wars.

Thirdly, there was an important question on the definition of the zone. From an Iranian perspective, Pakistan could be a problem if it is not included. Iran must be satisfied with reductions in Israel and

other countries, but Pakistan could pose a problem, so you have to deal with the question of how to define it in that respect.

On the question of 'What after 2012?' I would say, 'Let us try to get the 2012 conference together', and the follow-up would be the 2013 conference. This is going to be a process, hopefully not only on weapons but on the important things that you, your Royal Highness, mentioned; namely, dealing in a constructive way with what I think is still on the table – a special initiative by your country, the Arab Peace Initiative. Combining a weapons-related agenda with the overall embedding of the process for weapons in the region, and using the positive aspects like the Arab Peace Initiative, would be something very positive.

Sameh Aboul-Enein

In response to Rebecca, in terms of the build-up to 2012, this is a very important issue and I very much value the role of NGOs and civil society in this. We very much welcome the campaign by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). The whole campaign around abolishing nuclear weapons can come to the Middle East – it is transparency and openness time. We need to dismantle and destroy the programmes, and we need to bring verification models. We also need an awareness programme on that. In that respect, there is much to do from now until the conference. Following the conference, given that this is part of the NPT and the facilitator will have to report to the PrepComms, there will be an annual event until the review conference in 2015.

Secondly, in response to Prof Müller, I am also a believer in the role of the younger generation in the Arab Spring. I know many in the coalitions of the revolutions from Tahrir Square, and they are very instrumental. It is true that they are not in parliament and I do not think that they are overly busy with domestic issues. Many are very intellectual and well educated, and are very much of the national-security concerns, not only regionally but also internationally. Again, I stress that this will be a major issue that we should pay attention to during the next few years.

A third point was raised by Pierre on the CTBT. The whole issue of the CTBT, the CWC and the BWC are all part of what we envisaged to be discussed and negotiated in the zone. We cannot go à la carte; this is not the time. That time is over now. What we are proposing is that, within the negotiating process, these items will be developed. Therefore, it will be in a certain sequence, or simultaneously, that all countries in the region will have to abide by all these conventions.

Finally, to Dr Blix, on the issue of the Iranian file and how much it has affected the urgency, we already had Israel and we are now adding worries about Iran. If we do not control the issue – and this is the Egyptian view on this – we need the zone as soon as possible to put a limit on any proliferation in the Middle East in the years to come; otherwise, things will get out of hand.

Ariel Levite

I could not resist saying to Vladimir that the Russian position on all of these Middle East security issues would be greatly enhanced if Russia took a different position on what is happening currently in Syria. If you want us to take you seriously, you should look differently at what is happening in terms of the violence in the region.

With respect to transparency and openness, openness is, in many ways, preferable to [lack of] transparency, but frankly I think that you also have to understand what the limitations and risks associated with openness are. You saw how the discussion in Israel about what is going to happen with Iran and so on is getting out of hand, so do not underestimate the risks of tremendous openness.

This issue was not initiated by the government but went out of control. It has its benefits but it also has its limits.

In terms of the expectations of the 2012 conference, from an Israeli perspective – and again I do not speak for the government – if one managed to chart the course ahead that delinks it from the NPT and makes it much more Middle East-specific, that would be the greatest accomplishment of this meeting.

On the issue of the Palestinians, there is an understated assessment. The Palestinians have made incredible progress in state-building. Leveraging it from building state institutions into a settlement is where we hung up. The Israeli government, after tremendous internal fights, has gone along with building state institutions. They have not gone the extra step, which I greatly lament, but, as I said, there is more than one party to fault on this issue.

I want to conclude with two points. Hans Blix mentioned the Israeli poll. It is contrived and wrong. The poll is simply flawed, so do not take it too seriously. On a more fundamental level, however, there is considerable anxiety in Israel over the nuclear issue, as you can imagine.

I do fundamentally believe that making progress in the Middle East generally and in Iran particularly would require us adopting a new frame of mind around the NPT being an impediment rather than a help in terms of thinking things through. Let me explain what I mean. The bargain that was struck in the context of the NPT that countries could legitimately be 90 days away from nuclear weapons, could withdraw at any given time with an announcement, and could legitimately retain the technology and produce nuclear arms, and the application of this on a case-by-case basis – Japan or Brazil, for example – is not going to be a recipe for moving ahead, either in the Middle East or elsewhere.

We have to completely revisit that premise. At the time, we all understood that getting many countries into the treaty required telling them that they retained the option to withdraw with 90 days' notice and to retain all the technology that would make it possible for them to do so. The solution to the Iran issue, to the extent that the diplomatic option is out there, hinges on our ability to develop a different type of norm which is not based on this trigger-hair 90-day arrangement, which provides a more acceptable distinction between legitimate and illegitimate activity, that clearly has a heavy IAEA component, and that allows for all of the legitimate nuclear-energy aspirations to be realised – and here I am perfectly in line with Sameh on this one – in an even broader interpretation than we were used to but, at the same time, creates some kind of firewall between that and nuclear-weapons activity.

The IAEA has already embarked along such a path and tried to describe what constitutes possible military dimensions of a programme, so some building blocks are already being built to allow for that distinction to happen. I believe that the solution to the Iran issue ultimately hinges on our ability to show that what we expect of Iran would be part of a broader norm than is being put in place, and clearly would have to find its way into the nuclear-weapon-free zone discussions in the Middle East too.

Camille Grand

Thank you very much. We will immediately move to the next session and to the tricky issue of EU policies, before turning to the Iranian question circulating around the Middle East. May I ask you for a round of applause for our speakers? Thank you very much.