

EU NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

BRUSSELS, 12-13 DECEMBER 2017

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Since we last met here in Brussels at the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Forum just over a year ago, we have witnessed a further aggravation of negative trends in the realm of international disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation. Increasingly, three broader security-political trends stand out.

First, regional security continues to deteriorate, particularly in East Asia, the Middle East, and in Eastern Europe.

Second, the U.S. has taken a significant turn towards greater reliance on its military and away from multilateral diplomacy under President Trump's doctrine of *America First*, or *MAGA, Make America Great Again*.

Third, changes to the normative order of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are underway. Frustrated with decades of political deadlock, on July 7 this year, 122 states voted in favor of a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at United Nations headquarters in New York City.

None of those trends stands should be seen in isolation. Rather, they interact with one another ---- and increasingly in a negative way. Let me talk a bit about those trends and offer, perhaps, some recommendations on how EU member states might contribute to mitigating some of the resulting risks.

From Eastern Europe and the ongoing war in the eastern parts of Ukraine, over the conflict-ridden Middle East to North Korea's accelerating nuclear weapons program, regional security is in decline. The ramifications for disarmament and nonproliferation are profound.

Mutual predictability is the essence of security: that is why we have treaties, why we have monitoring, why we have verification, and why we have cooperation. Europe is experiencing a return to unpredictability, to Cold War-like relations with Russia. Subsequent to the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014, Russia and NATO have buried previous cooperative efforts. The threat of deliberate, inadvertent or accidental escalation looms over NATO's so-called 'Eastern Flank.' One of the ramifications of the return to confrontation is a breakdown of the bilateral U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control agenda.

Also since 2014, the U.S. government accuses Russia of violating the INF Treaty, which bans ground-launched intermediate-range missiles. Already ten years ago Russia had

already publicly questioned its utility; it was a grave mistake, they averred, to scrap a whole class of weapons, since only the US and Russia were not allowed to have them. In February 2017, the New York Times reported that Russia has already deployed a significant number of prohibited missiles in the ranges banned by the INF (5,00 - 5,500 kms).

Just last week, the US ratcheted up the pressure by reviewing military options, essentially research and development activities, including new intermediate-range cruise missiles, in response to what it says are Russia's ongoing violations of the INF Treaty. Washington further hinted at possible economic sanctions unless Russia returns to compliance. While Russia denied violating the accord and said it was ready for talks with the US to preserve the treaty, it is unclear whether the issue can be resolved at a planned meeting of the special commission that oversees the treaty.

To be clear, if both sides are unable to solve the ongoing INF crisis, the treaty might well become obsolete. Similarly, the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) is another flashpoint. In 2015, Russia suspended its participation and walked out of the Treaty's decision-making body.

All this means that today, mutual deterrence is again the order of the day. Even more worrisome, Europe might see a new arms race with conventional and nuclear-tipped medium-range missiles in the coming years. U.S. Congress has recently proposed legislation tasking the Department of Defense with developing a road-mobile ground-launched cruise missile with a range prohibited by the treaty.

The fallout from the INF crisis could be considerable. Without resolving the differences, leaders in Washington and Moscow might not be able to extend the New START agreement, limiting strategic weapons, beyond its expiration date in 2021. Agreeing on a possible follow-on treaty might become impossible in such an environment. Neither side is doing enough to resolve the differences. Instead, Moscow and Washington invest in the biggest nuclear modernization programs to date. Trump's calls for more and better nuclear weapons are anything but helpful in that context. Neither is his 10% increase in the US military budget - an increase that was not requested by the Pentagon. We are now awaiting the US Nuclear Posture Review - its first review since 2010 - with apprehension.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me turn to the Middle East. Wars have been raging in Syria and Yemen for several years, with no end in sight. Lebanon is in the middle of an acute crisis in government. Last week's announcement by President Trump to formally recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the US embassy there is further inflaming tensions in the Middle East. The decades-old antagonism between Saudi Arabia and Iran becomes more acute on an almost daily basis. Instead of trying to act as an honest broker in the region, Trump has publicly taken sides. His threatening to end the JCPOA might become the infamous 'straw that broke the camel's back.'

There is a real risk that the deal breaks apart should Washington opt out and exert significant pressure on its allies to curb trade with Teheran. The consequences could be dramatic. Without the economic incentives built into the deal, hardliners in Iran might push for a resumption of the nuclear program. Doing so could give way to increased proliferation activities across the entire region. If we think we are already experiencing an unstable Middle East, we might not have seen the end of what could quickly become a very slippery slope.

Meanwhile, in East Asia, North Korea is using nuclear arms and missile launches as a threat to its neighbors ---- and increasingly also to the United States. I spent some days in Japan last week and despite the experience of the atomic explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the debate over nuclear weapons is taking on a decidedly sharper focus, led by the Prime Minister Abe – a known hawk - whose government was strengthened in the October elections.

Pyongyang has clearly voiced its desire – or maybe I should call it its demand - to be recognized as a nuclear-armed power, and built up its short- to strategic-range strike capabilities. Efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis have failed as a result of insisting on preconditions to actual action. Deliberations in Washington that the paradigm of mutual deterrence is not applicable to North Korea, as underscored repeatedly by National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster, increase the likelihood of dangerous miscalculations. As unthinkable as it might have been before, today, war on the Korean peninsula, and even nuclear weapons use, is not a far-fetched horror scenario anymore. Here, rather than speaking of disarmament, we can only hope that sober minds in both Pyongyang and Washington will prevail. At best, the coming years might see the emergence of a somewhat stable deterrence relationship.

Undoubtedly, all those events have their impact on the normative order of global nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

Regional insecurity makes U.S. allies, who are depending on nuclear deterrence guarantees from Washington, reluctant to speak up against nuclear deterrence and postures. The effects thereof became most visible when all so-called ‘umbrella states’ rejected the new Ban Treaty.

The deterioration in U.S.-Russian relations makes the joint efforts to cut down the number of nuclear warheads of both sides improbable. Without the two countries – who still account for more than 90 per cent of nuclear weapons worldwide - reducing nuclear arms, others feel even more reluctant to scale back their reliance on these weapons.

The experience of negative security guarantees being ignored or broken, such as in the case of Ukraine makes proliferation more attractive. North Korea is a prime example. In fact, the instrument of negative security guarantees has been significantly weakened during the last years.

Finally, modernizing nuclear arsenals and prolonging their life-cycle well into the second half of the 21st century, as we can currently see in almost all nuclear-weapons states, makes fulfillment of Article VI of the NPT a distant goal, at best. Many believe it will

not happen in the next decades, and are resenting what amounts to an indefinite nuclear entitlement by the nuclear-weapon States under the NPT.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is the combination of these first- and second-order problems that have led to bitter frustrations among non-nuclear-weapons and non-umbrella states. Devoid of the power to exert direct pressure on the nuclear-weapons states, those states have decided in favor of the power of legality. This year's conclusion of a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is not only a sign of frustration. It is also a sign of the continued belief by a majority of states in the power of legal norms and customary international law. Soon, perhaps next year, we will see the treaty's entry-into-force. The enthusiasm and pride that filled the rooms and hallways of the UN Headquarters in New York after the Ban Treaty was finally concluded are well deserved. The nuclear-weapons states should at least respect the treaty for what it is: a powerful statement embracing peace and disarmament - --- by the way, still the bedrock of the United Nations.

But this new endeavor, this new treaty, does not come without risk. What happens next? What happens if nuclear-weapons states, unimpressed with the treaty, continue their current course? What happens to the NPT?

In fact, there is the risk that the chasm between 'nuclear haves' and 'nuclear need nots' on the one hand and 'nuclear have nots' on the other will grow. Dismissive language directed against the adherents of the Ban Treaty is inflaming tempers. Polarization will make it harder to build bridges. If both sides are unable to make concessions and to understand the motivations of the other, the NPT will come under enormous pressure. Yes, the Ban Treaty is a sign of hope. But we must make sure that the existing instruments of disarmament and nonproliferation remain in place as long as there is no overarching consensus to replace them with better agreements. Confrontation should not be a substitute for diplomacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the normative nuclear order up in the air, what happens to disarmament and nonproliferation efforts in the conventional realm? Let me just briefly touch upon the debate about so-called 'killer robots', or Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. UN efforts in Geneva to add lethal autonomous weapons systems to the list of weapons banned under the convention on certain conventional weapons (CCW), was a welcome move, but the latest meeting, convened last month after an 18-month hiatus, was unambitious despite mounting concerns over these weapons systems. While many advocated for starting international negotiations on a legally-binding instrument, the meeting only rolled over the previously-agreed mandate of continuing formal deliberations in 2018, for a total of 10 days.

This glacial pace will not tackle the issue and address the dangers of lethal autonomous weapons systems. Nearly everyone agrees that some form of human control must be maintained over these systems, but where some see urgency, others see the emergence of such weapons as a futuristic scenario that will not come soon. This latter view, however,

is dangerous: artificial intelligence is so rapidly advancing, that forecasts of emerging technologies evolve at a pace that makes policy assessments outdated the moment they are written.

Our ability to deal with the intended or inadvertent effects of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, additive manufacturing or supercomputing will only be as good as our ability to agree on the expected risks and to tackle them head on. I consider it a sign of encouragement that some of the world's leading robotics and artificial intelligence pioneers have this year called on the United Nations – and testified at the meetings of the CCW in Geneva - to ban the development and the use of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What can Europe, what can EU member states do to mitigate these growing risks?

In a nutshell, they can do three things:

First, they can *step up* diplomatic efforts where others only rely on the law of the jungle.

Second, they can *step in* where the United States cannot or will not uphold multilateral commitments anymore.

Third, they can continue to *speak out* in favor of disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation.

What does that mean in concrete terms?

- As regards Eastern Europe, EU member states should step up diplomatic efforts exploring options for a peacekeeping mission in Ukraine. As much as there was reason to view President Putin's foray with suspicion, at least it provided a potential window of opportunity for exploring the initiative. Indeed, also the United States have become more active in Ukraine, having appointed Kurt Volker as Special Envoy in July. While this step is certainly welcome, U.S. engagement comes with the pending threat of lethal arms transfers to the Ukrainian government, an escalating step many European governments find problematic.
- Yet escalating the conflict in Ukraine might also further strain the arms control agenda of both NATO and Russia as well as Washington and Moscow. Therefore, EU member states should in parallel speak out strongly in favor of preserving the bilateral U.S.-Russian arms control agenda, both in Washington and Moscow. Doing so should include voicing many Europeans' concerns with regard to preserving the INF Treaty, a cornerstone of European security.
- Also, the EU should further step up coordinated diplomatic efforts to preserve the Iran nuclear deal. EU High Representative Federica Mogherini has forcefully spoken out in defense of the JCPOA. The Ambassadors of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom already made a powerful appearance in Washington,

underscoring European solidarity and commitment to the agreement. But if push comes to shove, should Washington opt out of the arrangement, EU signatories, together with the other signatories, should be ready to step in and preserve the JCPOA. As much as this could mean further straining the relationship with Washington, salvaging the deal is a prime interest. Iran has abided by the JCPOA, as certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency multiple times. What took twelve years of negotiation and painstaking coordination of positions among six major powers, this agreement – approved also by Security Council resolution 2231 - should not be jettisoned as one Government rejects it for what can only be seen as domestic reasons.

- But speaking out in favor of disarmament and nonproliferation will not be enough when it comes to the wider security situation in the Middle East. Words must be matched by appropriate action. This pertains also to arms exports to the region. It is in the EU's own interest not to fuel or prolong conflicts in its direct neighborhood through arms sales. The moral obligations we have, or should have, when it comes to conventional arms sales will only become more acute in the years ahead. The more industry will rely on new dual-use goods and techniques, such as additive manufacturing, the more pressing the need to agree on common regulations.
- 2020 will see the next NPT Review Conference. As I have outlined before, fewer and fewer steps towards the goal of “general and complete disarmament” are palpable. In my humble opinion, particularly those states that enjoy extended nuclear deterrence guarantees should step up their efforts to bridge the growing gap between the ban treaty advocates and the nuclear-weapons states. Without those states reaching out to both sides the NPT is awaiting a very uncertain future.
- Last but not least, EU member states should strengthen the role of civil society groups, and particularly of youth organizations advocating disarmament. It is not for nothing that the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded ICAN with the Nobel Peace Prize this year. ICAN and others remind us that constant engagement and steadfast dedication to the greater good can lead to tremendous results. I am particularly pleased by the fact that ICAN and others are actually run by young women and men from all over the globe. Supporting and fostering up-and-coming experts and campaigners on disarmament and nonproliferation should become a prime target of the EU in the years ahead. As most of you know, conferences on arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation usually rely on experts of a certain age segment, and I include myself in that regard. But if we want to address tomorrow's challenges, if we want to preserve the necessary expertise, we have to invest in young people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As much as the current course of world events gives reason to worry, we should neither become cynical nor give up. Dedication means attention to detail. It means experiencing daily setbacks and still mustering the courage to go forward.

It is this spirit, this form of commitment still gives me hope for disarmament and nonproliferation.

Thank you very much for your attention!