

“BUILDING A NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE WORLD”
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As the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate is celebrated we are fortunate, as invited participants of this important conference, to have the pleasure and privilege of being visitors in this ancient land – the Land of the Wanderers - heir to a centuries old traditional culture; a land which is at the same time a vibrant modern nation. It is a nation which since 1991 has been a trailblazer in international relations and in the specific area of building a nuclear weapon free world - the theme of our conference.

The vision of a nuclear weapon free world inspired the leader of Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, long before it was announced by President Obama in his now famous Prague speech of 2009. Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine were left with Russian nuclear weapons on their soil when the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union imploded. I was personally witness to the events as the head of the UN Institute for Disarmament Affairs (UNIDIR) in Geneva - the voluntarily funded autonomous institute within the United Nations established to generate ideas and promote action on disarmament and security.

The Lisbon Protocol to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty was an agreement by representatives of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan that all nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union on the soil of those four states would be destroyed or transferred to the control of Russia. All four states agreed to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, with Russia the successor to the Soviet Union as a nuclear weapon, and the other three states joining as non-nuclear weapon states. The protocol was signed in Lisbon, Portugal, on May 23, 1992. Of the three countries Kazakhstan was the most meticulous in fulfilling its obligations and had surrendered all nuclear weapons to Russia by May 1995.

Another historic decision taken by Kazakhstan unilaterally was the closure of the nuclear weapons test site in Semipalatinsk where during the period 1948-89, 456 tests had been conducted by the then USSR with disastrous consequences to the health of the people in the area and the environment - consequences that linger to this day. It is 25 years to this day when that momentous closure of the site took place under the courageous leadership of President Nazarbayev. Since then, in an impressive example of international collaboration for peace and security, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the USA have co-operated in the clean up of the site. Today we memorialize that historic event by observing, as a result of an initiative at the UN by our host country, the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Moreover the ATOM Project initiated a global moment of silence on that day to honour all victims of nuclear weapons testing.

Finally, in another major step towards building a nuclear weapon free world, the Almaty Declaration of 1992 called for the declaration of Central Asia as a nuclear weapon free zone (CANWFZ). It was followed by the five Central Asian nations co-sponsoring a resolution in the 1997 UNGA calling for CANWFZ and for the United Nations to assist in its creation. Early in 1998 at the personal invitation of Kofi Annan I assumed duties as Under-Secretary-General heading the newly re-established Department for Disarmament Affairs as a key element of the reforms made by Annan. It was thus my task to conduct the negotiations for the implementation of the CANWFZ resolution with the co-operation of the Central Asian states. It was the first time the UN was directly involved in the negotiation of a nuclear weapon free zone. We held discussions among experts from the five Central Asian states and then extended the scope to include the 5 Nuclear weapon states.

It had long been my personal conviction that nuclear weapon free zones are an invaluable mechanism in achieving progress towards a nuclear weapon free world. While the Treaty for the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was signed in 1968 as a product of the Cold War with the USA and then USSR co-drafting it, the Treaty of Tlatelolco predated the NPT and was a product of non-nuclear weapon states in Latin America and the Caribbean. It was affirmative action and a self-conscious act of rejecting nuclear weapons in the safeguarding of their national security.

Nuclear weapon free zones are in fact quarantine zones to protect these countries from the nuclear weapon contagion. They have no nuclear umbrellas. They have no extended deterrence. But, they have, through a policy of self-reliance, adopted a nuclear weapon-free zone in order to protect themselves. Once states in a region have a consensus on a NWFZ the success of their efforts is assured.

To solidify this consensus I decided, with the support of Secretary-General Annan to visit the 5 Central Asian countries to ascertain that the political will did exist for a CANWFZ. That was my first visit to Kazakhstan in 2002. All my visits to the Central Asian countries and my high level talks confirmed that a strong political will for concluding a CANWFZ did exist. Indeed we could have signed the Treaty in 2002 with Kofi Annan himself being present at the signing ceremony in Semipalatinsk. Sadly that was not to be because of the obstructionist attitude of the Western NWS. I ceased to be USG in 2003 but to my great satisfaction the opposition of the Western NWS was overcome and the CANWFZ was signed in 2006. I am also glad that the protocols to the Treaty were signed by the NWS at the NPT Review Conference in 2010. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Central Asian states, and in particular Kazakhstan, on their political courage and their persistence and dedication to achieving security without nuclear weapons in their own region.

We have miles to go in this journey towards a nuclear weapon free world. Kazakhstan is uniquely situated to make a dynamic contribution consistent with its achievements to date. Straddling the two continents of Europe and Asia it belongs to OSCE and to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The spirit of the Helsinki Accords is desperately needed in both continents to achieve détente. Kazakhstan is expected to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-18 and, with Japan, is co-chair of the CTBT piloting the long overdue entry-into-force of this key Treaty.

There are of course other steps in the journey to a nuclear weapon free world apart from the creation of more NWFZs and the entry into force of the CTBT. They include “filling the legal gap” by negotiating a legal instrument prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons as the Humanitarian Initiative has demanded and the majority in the Open-ended Working Group on Disarmament (OEWG) has recommended. Preliminary steps include the No First Use (NFU) pledge that the US is considering, a fresh deep cut in US and Russian stockpiles and a creating a Group of Scientific Experts in the Geneva based Conference on Disarmament to work on the verification of a NWC. I am sure all these will be discussed in our conference and I thank the Government of Kazakhstan and the PNND for creating a conducive setting for this.

As President of the 1995 Nobel Peace Laureate, the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, I appeal to all in the memorable words of the 1955 London Manifesto co-signed by the Founder President of Pugwash Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein – “Remember your humanity and forget the rest”.