

Fresh momentum for disarmament

by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

At the beginning of 2009, the prospects for a fresh start in disarmament and arms control look good. President Obama has taken office in Washington, and his administration places greater emphasis on disarmament and arms control than its predecessor, announcing concrete initiatives such as talks on a successor agreement to the START I Treaty with Russia to reduce the number of nuclear weapons. Moscow, too, is sending out encouraging messages – all this is new momentum for disarmament which we should use!

New disarmament initiatives more important than ever

There are currently more reasons than ever before to launch new initiatives. There is a new sense of distrust that undermines the disarmament architecture so arduously constructed over many years. This holds true not only for conventional but also for nuclear disarmament: Iran still refuses to comply with its obligations to disclose its nuclear programme, while Syria's nuclear activities pose urgent questions, and North Korea is once again straying from the path of confidence-building. Not only are there new candidates aspiring to "The Bomb", but there are still too many nuclear warheads stored in the arsenals of the United States and Russia.

Senior statesmen in the U.S. and Germany call for nuclear-weapon-free world

A world free of nuclear weapons – in a joint article in 2007 George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn set out this ambitious goal. The four German "wise men" Helmut Schmidt, Richard von Weizsäcker, Egon Bahr and Hans-Dietrich Genscher further developed this idea in their reply at the start of this year. It is clear to all that if the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world is to have a chance of becoming reality we must work hard on

NOTES & QUOTES

"We unreservedly support the call by Messrs. Kissinger, Shultz, Perry and Nunn for a turnaround on nuclear policy, and not only in their country. This applies in particular to the following proposals: ... America should ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty."

OP-ED IN THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE ON 9 JANUARY 2009, *TOWARD A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD: A GERMAN VIEW*, BY FOUR GERMAN SENIOR STATESMEN: HELMUT SCHMIDT, RICHARD VON WEIZÄCKER, EGON BAHR, AND HANS-DIETRICH GENSCHER.

the details: preparations are well underway for next year's Review Conference for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Germany continues to promote the CTBT's entry into force

Germany already put forward proposals to this end in 2007. Central to these is the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). This agreement not only contains the further spread and development of nuclear weapons, but also sends an important message to those countries yet to join the NPT and the CTBT, that the nuclear weapon States, by not conducting any more nuclear tests, are demonstrating their commitment to comply with the NPT obligations. This is why I greatly welcome President Obama's announcement that he intends to submit the CTBT to the Senate for ratification.

CTBT key to nuclear non-proliferation

The CTBT's swift entry into force would represent a major step towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and a cornerstone of the new stable security architecture which we must work on. Further steps such as a successor to START, the retention and enhancement of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, or negotiations on a treaty prohibiting the

production of weapons-grade fissile material (the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty or FMCT) must follow. We must be aware that new impulses in international security and disarmament policy will only be effective if all major players are willing to cooperate and agree on joint action. This also applies to the CTBT – a special responsibility is borne by those countries who must still ratify the Treaty so that it can finally enter into force. ■

Biographical note



Frank-Walter Steinmeier has been Germany's Foreign Minister since 2005 and the country's Deputy Chancellor since 2007. He is the Social Democratic Party's candidate for Chancellor in the 2009

parliamentary elections. During Gerhard Schröder's chancellorship, Steinmeier headed the Federal Chancellery where he was responsible for overall policy coordination within the Government. As Foreign Minister, Steinmeier has made disarmament and non-proliferation some of his key priorities. ■