

# Moving forward on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament

## A view from Switzerland

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On 5 February 2011, the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, exchanged the instruments of ratification of the New START on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, officially bringing the New START into force. This was an important step towards President Barack Obama's visionary goal – spelled out in Prague in April 2009 – of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

### SERIOUS CHALLENGES REMAIN BEFORE A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD CAN BE REALIZED

On the other hand, without denying this positive development, we have to face the fact that serious challenges remain on the road to a nuclear-weapon-free world. From a broader point of view, Switzerland remains convinced that one cannot expect full commitment to the disarmament process – as well as more concrete progress – before the international community can be convinced that:

- nuclear weapons are not the appropriate means to meet the current security challenges, which include terrorism, organized crime, migration, the misuse of information technology, and financial market instability or climate change;

- nuclear weapons constitute an existential threat to the world in themselves. Their very existence makes them attractive to proliferators, whether States or non-State actors, and as a consequence increases instability rather than stability; and that
- credible long-term security policies must be based on universal, non-discriminatory and legally-binding instruments. In the current situation, however, the world is encumbered with a have and have-nots approach to nuclear disarmament.

Just because today the ball seems to be in the court of the nuclear weapon States, must the non-nuclear weapon States give up on the objective of a world without nuclear weapons? Is nuclear disarmament an issue for nuclear weapon States alone? The answer is clearly "no". We all are stakeholders in our planet's survival, and we all have the right – and the obligation – to get involved in the nuclear disarmament process.



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### NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE IMMORAL AND ILLEGAL

At the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, I denounced nuclear weapons as immoral and illegal. They are fundamentally

immoral because they cause massive and indiscriminate destruction in terms of human lives, material resources and consequences for the environment. They are illegal by their very nature with regard to international humanitarian law. Their use violates without exception all fundamental principles and rules of international humanitarian law. Since a nuclear war would threaten the very survival of humankind, a debate should be launched on the legitimacy of the use of nuclear weapons regardless of the legitimacy of the motive of defence that can be invoked. We must examine the question regarding the point at which the rights of States must yield to the interests of humanity. Switzerland, the depositary of the Geneva Conventions, feels a special responsibility to bring the humanitarian perspective back to the heart of the debate on nuclear disarmament. To this end, Switzerland has initiated a study on the subject of delegitimizing nuclear weapons, and it has successfully worked for the inclusion of a reference to international humanitarian law in the final document of the last NPT Review Conference. Switzerland intends to remain actively engaged in this humanitarian approach.

As a State that gives high priority to strengthening international peace, and as one convinced of the importance of the multilateral framework in this respect, Switzerland has also recently developed a range of activities as intermediate steps in promoting the vision of a world without nuclear weapons. Together with Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand and Nigeria, Switzerland has tabled proposals to reduce the alert levels of nuclear weapons. The fact that hundreds of nuclear weapons remain on a high alert level, ready to be fired within minutes, poses a specific and unacceptable threat. These levels of alert do not make any sense some 20 years after the end of the Cold War. They do not correspond to the current international situation. Switzerland has thus sponsored a UN General Assembly

resolution on "de-alerting" nuclear weapons, which was adopted by an overwhelming majority of States at the 2010 UN General Assembly. Switzerland will remain active on this issue.

## »By limiting the development of more advanced types of nuclear weapons, the CTBT prevents the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects.«

The 2010 NPT Review Conference also agreed on a comprehensive action plan on nuclear disarmament, which includes concrete steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It must now be our aim to ensure that these commitments are fulfilled. Their implementation must be closely monitored and the irreversibility of the steps taken must be ensured.

One of these commitments is related to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Switzerland was among the first States to sign and ratify the CTBT. In addition, in 2003 a Swiss seismic station was inaugurated as part of the International Monitoring System to verify compliance with the Treaty.

### SWITZERLAND'S UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR THE CTBT

Switzerland's full support for the objectives of the CTBT is not only related to the fact that the Treaty bans all nuclear tests, anytime, anywhere and in any form. The CTBT is also intended to constrain the qualitative development of nuclear weapons. By limiting the development of more advanced types of nuclear weapons, the CTBT prevents the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all

its aspects. Since the conclusion of the negotiations on such a treaty was one of the objectives adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the CTBT also constitutes a guarantee for maintaining the fundamental commitment to nuclear disarmament given by the nuclear weapon States. Furthermore, with the establishment of a wide-ranging monitoring system, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) provides the international community with a tremendous confidence-building measure. Last, but not least, if it enters into force, the CTBT will prevent further potential health and environmental damage caused by nuclear test explosions.

Switzerland will thus continue to spare no effort to promote the entry into force of the CTBT. In this context, Switzerland will support the organization of a special segment focusing on nuclear disarmament at the upcoming 125th International Parliamentary Union Assembly, due to take place in Bern in October 2011.

It is also important to identify other areas where additional efforts are needed. In this context, Switzerland underlines the field of nuclear doctrines, where the logic of nuclear deterrence has hardly evolved since the Cold War. Switzerland is convinced that a future and sustainable concept of security must be widened to include not only military and strategic aspects but also the economic, energy,



Auxiliary seismic station  
AS102, Davos, Switzerland



Micheline Calmy-Rey speaking at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, New York, 3 May 2010. UN Photo/Evan Schneider

environmental, development and humanitarian dimensions. Nuclear weapons will never be eliminated if one does not envisage a future without them. A debate is urgently needed on security without nuclear weapons. Switzerland will also be active on these issues during the coming years in order to contribute to the new NPT review process, which will begin in 2012.

Looking at the renewed disarmament efforts as well as the challenges ahead, Switzerland cannot but conclude that there is no alternative to outlawing the use of nuclear weapons and gradually and systematically getting rid of them. The Five-Point Plan of the UN Secretary General of October 2008 sets out how we could proceed towards the outlawing of nuclear weapons. Switzerland supports this plan. It has the advantage of flexibility. It does not preclude the ultimate grand design of a Nuclear

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Weapons Convention and it does not preclude a step-by-step approach.

Nuclear disarmament is not a matter of idealism. It is a matter of reason and responsibility. And it is not an illusion either. The real illusion is to believe that some States can continue to rely on such weapons and prevent their proliferation. Nuclear disarmament is also a matter of conviction and of creativity, the one stimulating the other. Convinced that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is a noble goal, Switzerland will continue to contribute constructively and concretely towards the achievement of this objective.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

**MICHELINE CALMY-REY** is President of the Swiss Confederation, an office she held once before in 2007. Ms Calmy-Rey has been a member of the Swiss Federal Council since 2003 as Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. She pursues an active foreign policy marked by a commitment to promoting peace, respect for international law and human rights, and the fight against poverty. Previously, Ms Calmy-Rey was a member of the Geneva Cantonal Government.