



**Address to the staff of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive
Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

By

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Dear colleagues of the Preparatory Commission, I would like to begin by thanking you for having me here today at your retreat and thanking Dr. Lassina Zerbo, for inviting me to share my experiences and insights.

The focus of your retreat on management and human resources is something that, after four years as Under-Secretary-General for Management in the United Nations Secretariat, I would like to think I know something about. The purpose of the Preparatory Commission – supporting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty – goes hand-in-glove with a core role of my present position as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, that is, the elimination of nuclear weapons.

As a result, I am delighted to speak in this particular forum.

You have asked me to provide some background on the political and security environments in which the work of the Preparatory Commission is undertaken – a *‘tour d’horizon’* of the issues shaping the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

Colleagues, I will not ‘sugar coat’ it: 2015 promises to be a challenging year for disarmament.

In August, we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by nuclear weapons. This ought to be a sobering reminder of the horrific consequences of these weapons and of the human cost of war.

Instead, we find ourselves confronted by heightened tension between the Russian Federation and the United States that has dampened their appetites for further nuclear arms reductions and raised the alarming possibility of regression in existing agreements, underlined most recently by the United States’ accusations that Russian cruise missile tests are in contravention of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and Russia’s announcement that it will not participate in the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit.

Nuclear deterrence, a concept that should have been consigned to the dustbin of history with the end of the Cold War, remains entrenched in the security policies of countries representing most of humanity, including both possessor states and those states that shelter under so-called ‘nuclear umbrellas’. Every nuclear-armed state is modernizing and enhancing its weapons and delivery systems at the cost of billions of dollars that could, in my humble opinion, be better spent on less destructive activities. Several nuclear-armed states also continue to quantitatively expand their stockpiles.

Colleagues, this disingenuous narrative of nuclear weapons as the ultimate guarantor of national security or as a symbol of national prestige has ramifications for your own work at the Preparatory Commission. It is the reason why, almost twenty years after it was negotiated, the CTBT – a critical building block in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons – has yet to enter into force.

Continuing in this vein, there has not been enough progress between the Arab states and Israel on the long-overdue Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and all other

Weapons of Mass Destruction, despite the persistent efforts by the facilitator, Ambassador Jaako Laajava and the convening States.

I am also forced to admit that the UN's disarmament machinery remains dysfunctional – the Conference on Disarmament has not implemented a programme of work in almost twenty years and the UN Disarmament Commission has not agreed on anything since 1999.

Colleagues, in the midst of these dark clouds, there have been some bright spots. For example, I am encouraged by the positive momentum and atmosphere surrounding the talks between Iran and the E3+3 to find a durable and mutually acceptable agreement regarding Iran's nuclear programme. It is my firm hope that all sides can stay the course and not take any actions that would derail negotiations.

Similarly, although the bitter conflict in Syria will not, in the words of the Secretary-General, be brought to a close without an inclusive and Syrian-led political process, Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, facilitated by the United Nations and the OPCW, has been a significant bright spot. It has seen the complete removal of all identified chemicals from Syria and the commencement of a process to destroy all of Syria's chemical weapons facilities.

As you all know, the future of nuclear disarmament will be hotly debated in May, with the commencement of the NPT Review Conference. The treaty represents the fulcrum of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. The division between the nuclear 'haves' and nuclear 'have nots' over the path to nuclear disarmament is as deep as it has ever been. Yet I would like to note that there has been a positive development to emerge from this so-called 'disarmament malaise' – frustration with the status quo has seen many States parties begin to contemplate new pathways to nuclear disarmament.

Most prominent among these is the humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament, supported by a clear majority of States, as illustrated by the 158 States that attended the third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, hosted by Austria, last December. At this conference, for the first time, two Nuclear Weapon States, the United States and the United Kingdom, officially participated.

I realise the humanitarian approach has its detractors and has been dismissed as a 'distraction', but it is also obvious that this movement has energised a new generation of NGOs and government officials, and brought together a range of players not traditionally associated with disarmament, from human rights groups to environmentalists.

Colleagues, I would like now to turn to the other fundamental element of my position as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs – the reduction and regulation of conventional arms. It is arguable that the view here is no less bleak. Many of you may be aware that in 2013, the total annual global military expenditures reached US\$1.7 trillion. That incredible figure is around twenty times the total amount of additional funds needed to attain all the Millennium Development Goals and eradicate poverty from the world.

In 2014, secessionist, insurgent and terrorist movements, such as ISIL and Boko Haram, continued to seize territory, commit gross human rights abuses and instigate appalling humanitarian crises. The weapons used to propagate these horrible crimes are often sourced from the illicit arms market that is rooted in the legal arms trade.

This illicit arms market results from diversions that occur as a result of arms transfers without proper controls, unauthorized retransfers, thefts from poorly secured stockpiles, or from hand-outs to armed groups.

Fortunately, the international community recognised the need to fill this gap and acted. In 2014, only one and half years after it was negotiated, the Arms Trade Treaty entered into force. Although the complete benefits of the treaty will only be realized through universal participation – including by the major arms exporters and importers such as the United States, the Russian Federation, China and India – this truly historic treaty will play a critical role in ensuring that all actors involved in the arms trade must be held accountable and must be expected to comply with internationally agreed standards. For example, by ensuring that their arms exports are not going to be used to violate arms embargoes or to fuel conflict and exercising better control over arms and ammunition imports in order to prevent diversion or re-transfers to unauthorized users.

On this positive note, I'd like to end my tour d'horizon. As you can see, the environment in which the Preparatory Commission conducts its work is complex, to say the least. For those of us that work in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, the obstacles can seem daunting.

But to paraphrase the Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius, who died here in Austria: Just because a thing seems difficult to you, do not think it impossible to accomplish. That is the spirit in which we must pursue our Organizations' ambitious agendas.
Thank you.