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Ban Ki-moon address at NPT Review Conference

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Your Excellency, Ambassador Cabactulan, President of the NPT Review Conference,

H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to welcome you to the United Nations. I congratulate sincerely Amb. Cabactulan, President of this Review Conference for his heavy responsibility to guide this very important review conference towards a great success, meeting the expectations of the international community, realizing the aspirations of human beings to make this world free of nuclear weapons.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The work you undertake this day is of immense importance to humankind.

Hopes - and expectations - are high.

The world's people look to you for action.

Action to protect them from the destructive power of nuclear weapons.

To rein in rising spending on nuclear weapons.

To build a safer and more secure world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Disarmament and non-proliferation are among my top priorities.

We all know it is possible. But frankly, this agenda has been asleep too long.

That is why I have been sounding the alarm about the menace of nuclear weapons.

I have put forward a concrete action plan, convinced that our moment is now.

I have sought to strengthen our laws and instruments, committed to serve as a bridge among peoples and nations with different views, sometimes deeply held.

Chilling memories from my visit last month to Semipalatinsk, the former nuclear test site in Kazakhstan, are still fresh in my mind.

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On August 6, on the anniversary of the day the first atomic bomb was dropped, I will visit Hiroshima. There I will say, once again, we stand for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Sixty five years later, the world still lives under the nuclear shadow.

How long must we wait to rid ourselves of this threat? How long will we keep passing the problem to succeeding generations, to our children?

Five years ago, we gathered for a similar review conference, and failed - plain and simple.

This time, we can, and must, do better.

We have a choice: to leave a legacy of fear and inaction, or to act, with vision and courage and leadership.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty is one of the most important multilateral accords in history.

Though not perfect, it is the cornerstone of the world's nuclear non-proliferation regime.

It enjoys nearly universal membership.

We need this regime as much as ever.

The nuclear threat remains real.

It has evolved in new and varied forms.

That is why you are here.

The world's people want more from us:

More progress on disarmament.

More arms cuts and more transparency.

There are doubts about compliance.

There are resentments between nuclear "haves" and "have-nots."

There is grave and growing concern over nuclear terrorism, the black market in nuclear technology and materials, the danger that a regional conflict could "go nuclear."

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Solutions to the multiple challenges facing the Treaty do not lie in elevating one of the three pillars over another.

Progress on disarmament cannot await a world free of war, nuclear proliferation or terrorism.

Progress on non-proliferation cannot await the elimination of the last nuclear weapon.

Advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy cannot be held hostage to either disarmament or non-proliferation.

From the earliest days of the NPT, the international community understood that these goals must be pursued simultaneously. They are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we begin this 8th Review Conference of the NPT, there are encouraging signs of progress.

The new START agreement signed by President Medvedev of Russia and President Obama of the United States.

The Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, to be followed by another one in Seoul in two years' time.

Many other initiatives from governments, including by other nuclear-weapon States.

Mobilization by civil society.

We must build on this momentum.

I see five benchmarks for success.

First, real progress towards disarmament.

I urge nuclear-weapon states to reaffirm the "unequivocal undertaking" to eliminate nuclear weapons. Failure to do so would be a step backward. It is time to translate this commitment into action.

I also encourage you to update and expand on the "Thirteen Practical Steps" adopted at the review conference ten years ago. The steps offer a solid platform on which to build. What was lacking was political will to translate words into action. You do not need to start from scratch.

Second, movement towards the universality of the Treaty.

I urge those countries that are currently outside the Treaty regime to accede to it as soon as possible.

Pending their accession, there is a need for measures to ensure the safety and security of those countries' arsenals and technology. Nuclear materials must not be acquired by non-state actors and terrorists.

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Additional measures should include a moratorium on nuclear tests, tight export controls on fissile materials and related technologies, and stringent command and control systems for their arsenals.

There is also a need to ensure that the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes does not have unintended consequences.

It should be unacceptable for countries to use the Treaty as cover to develop nuclear weapons, only to withdraw afterwards.

Moreover, nuclear energy must be developed under agreed safeguards, especially given predictions of a nuclear energy renaissance as energy demands grow and pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions increases.

Third, strengthening the rule of law.

Our quest for a nuclear-weapon-free world also includes a framework of legal instruments that complement the NPT.

Ever since 1999, when I was chairperson of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty - CTBT - I have strongly advocated for early entry into force of this key instrument.

The time has come to think very seriously about setting a timeframe for ratification. The current mechanism for entry into force dates from a time when there were questions about the Treaty's monitoring and verification system. But times have changed. The system has proven its effectiveness.

The bottom line is this: It has been 15 years since the Treaty was opened for signature. Here, too, how long must we wait? We need to consider seriously an alternative mechanism for bringing the Treaty into effect.

In this context, let me warmly welcome the announcement of Indonesia that it will soon ratify the Treaty. I urge others to follow suit. As the Treaty's depository, I am ready to visit the capitals of the remaining countries whose ratification is essential, and talk to the respective leaders about their concerns.

Another vital instrument is the landmark Convention on Nuclear Terrorism. I have called for a conference to review its implementation, to be held this year or next.

I have also called on the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations immediately on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes. If the CD cannot agree on its programme of work, it may need stronger impetus from a higher political level. Toward that end, the members of the CD could consider a ministerial meeting this September, on the margins of the General Assembly of the United Nations here in New York.

I also urge all States to accept the IAEA's Additional Protocol. At the Nuclear Security Summit, I was encouraged by the overwhelming support for improving the IAEA's capacity and system of safeguards.

Fourth, progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the Middle East and on other regional concerns.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones make significant contributions to disarmament and non-proliferation. They build confidence that can lead to progress in other areas.

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That is why I strongly support efforts to create such a zone in the Middle East, and urge you to engage in a robust discussion of this matter.

With respect to the Iranian nuclear programme, I call on Iran to fully comply with Security Council resolutions and fully cooperate with the IAEA.

I encourage Iran to accept the nuclear fuel supply proposal put forward by the Agency. This would be an important confidence-building measure.

And I encourage the President of Iran to engage constructively. Let us be clear: the onus is on Iran to clarify the doubts and concerns about its programme.

Looking to Northeast Asia, I encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks as soon as possible, without preconditions, to realize the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

My fifth and final expectation is a strengthened NPT review process, including through more active engagement by the relevant UN organs.

Implementation of the Treaty would benefit from more systematic national reporting and better substantive and organizational support. You may wish to consider ways in which a small, permanent structure could help.

The Treaty's lack of an effective tool for cases of non-compliance is a significant institutional deficit.

The Security Council has a special and crucial role to play in filling this gap, including through regular ministerial meetings to follow up on last year's historic summit.

I also recognize the importance of initiatives by the General Assembly, as set out in my action plan.

My Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters has also put forward sound proposals that bear consideration.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

Let us remember that you are here not simply to avoid a nuclear nightmare, but to build a safer world for all.

Many countries have shown great leadership – those that have abolished nuclear weapons, those that have established nuclear-weapon-free zones, and those that have reduced arsenals.

I challenge you to go further still.

I challenge you to take the steps, today, that will set the stage for a break-through tomorrow.

We need more examples of what can be achieved – not more excuses for why it is not possible.

Now is our time to deliver on one of the deepest aspirations of humankind, and one of the founding resolutions of this

Organization.

It is in your hands. I count on your leadership and commitment.

Thank you very much.