

Thank you very much, Mayor Kautz, Mr. Nickels, Mr. Tom Cochran, fellow mayors, and honorable guests, for providing me with this opportunity to speak at your winter meeting.

I cannot properly express how honored and privileged I feel to address two consecutive meetings of this august organization. Last year in Providence, I spoke of the great hope that President Obama had aroused throughout the world that the country with the longest history with nuclear weapons would lead the world in jointly renouncing these weapons of mass destruction. As with so many other high hopes, seven months on, we see the need for a recalibration. I would like to propose such a recalibration today, in the hopes that it will allow the USCM to contribute more effectively to ending the mutual hostage-taking of the Cold War before any US, Russian, or Chinese cities come to harm.

Here I refer to the path-breaking “Cities Are Not Targets!” resolution adopted by the USCM 2006 summer meeting in Las Vegas. The resolution expressed dismay that stability between East and West was perceived to rest on the capacity of each side to destroy in a matter of hours most if not all of each other’s major cities. With the Cold War long over and with new threats now more urgent, the resolution called on all sides to renounce the targeting of cities and seek the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Following up on letters from the USCM, members of Mayors for Peace in the United States met in Washington with the Russian Ambassador and the Chinese Minister Consul. The meetings were cordial, your demand was recognized as legitimate, but the ultimate outcome was silence. We also followed up with the Defense Department and the State Department. State said that targeting policy was not within its purview, referring us to Defense; but Defense had already ruled out any discussion whatsoever on targeting. Mayors for Peace members encountered similar stonewalling by the other nuclear powers.

I was able to join several British colleagues for a discussion with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. At first they disingenuously claimed that they were not targeting cities because all their weapons had been ‘de-targeted.’ Once they acknowledged that de-targeted weapons can be re-targeted, they quickly assured us that cities were not targeted “as such.” If even a minor military or economic target was in or near a city, well, tough luck for that city! In subsequent, correspondence we were informed that all targeting was done in strict conformity with international law. We therefore pressed them to confirm that cities were not targets since the wholesale destruction of a city could not possibly be in conformity with international law. I must admit I was surprised by their reply. They asserted that British deterrence was “enhanced” by ambiguity over whether or not cities were in fact targets – end of discussion. So for the sake of a more perfect deterrence, Britain was and is perfectly willing to threaten the genocidal mass destruction of cities.

Our pursuit of a safer world for cities is not selfish. In the first case, cities are now home to over half of humanity; it is our responsibility as mayors to look after the safety of our citizens

and their property. But – in a nuclear armed world – cities also constitute a danger to the world as a whole. Scientists now tell us that as few as one hundred nuclear weapons could cause a billion deaths due to catastrophic climate change. To a nuclear weapon, a city is nothing more than a super-sized tinderbox waiting to be ignited. The result is a firestorm with temperatures many times higher than regular fires. The heat of that fire reduces the city to tons of soot, which is lofted high above rain clouds. The soot from 100 firestorms would block enough sunlight to destroy crops and cause famine on a scale unprecedented in human history. Hundreds of millions would simply starve to death. Hundreds of millions more would suffer from serious malnutrition and fall victim to pandemics sweeping the globe. Climatologists, agriculturalists, and physicians conservatively estimate one billion additional deaths in the decade following firestorms in just 100 cities. I will not go into the even more horrendous consequences of the destruction of 2000 cities by the nuclear weapons now ready to launch on warning. Suffice it to say that everything we have worked for and accomplished in a million years of human evolution could be wiped out in less time than it will take me to finish this speech – which I promise will not be too long!

What, you may be asking, does this have to do with President Obama?! Everything!

In his Prague speech, President Obama made several references to the threat nuclear weapons pose to cities, and to the larger threat, in turn, to the world. Let me quote just one:

“One nuclear weapon exploded in one city — be it New York or Moscow, Islamabad or Mumbai, Tokyo or Tel Aviv, Paris or Prague — could kill hundreds of thousands of people. And no matter where it happens, there is no end to what the consequences might be — for our global safety, our security, our society, our economy, to our ultimate survival.”

[End quote.]

But the President did not intend just to frighten people; in the Prague speech he did something far more profound: he called for a global ‘Velvet Revolution’ against the twenty-first century counterpart to the oppression of totalitarianism of the twentieth century: the fear of nuclear weapons. He equated those who would stand in the way of our liberation from the nuclear threat to those who counseled against confronting dictators. Again I quote:

“Just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century. ... we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, "Yes, we can."”

[On your table you will find an abridged version of the Prague speech. I urge you to read it; indeed to read the full speech.] Coming from a U.S. President, this is powerful stuff. He also said:

“As the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it, we can start it.”

I will talk later about this important reference to Hiroshima and Nagasaki; but let me focus now on the words ‘lead’ and ‘start’. Six months after that speech, we must ask: Has President Obama started the endeavor? Is the United States providing leadership? Are we on the road to success; to, in his words, “the safety of a world without nuclear weapons”? We have most definitely seen a start: it is even called START! That is the START replacement treaty [soon to be][just] concluded. This is an important development and a most encouraging sign.

But is it leadership? The other nuclear-armed states are waiting for Russia and the United States to cut their bloated arsenals a good deal further before they will join in the reductions process; and the rest of the world has been waiting since 1970 – when they renounced the acquisition of nuclear weapons – for the nuclear powers to fulfill their promise of nuclear disarmament. So who is in the forefront?

We can question the leadership also in terms of overall direction. If your citizens felt it were time for a new football stadium and you proposed to start by building one bleacher, fifty yards of field and one goal post, you would be laughed out of town. And yet, all of the proposals we hear from the United States to date are of this piecemeal nature. In contrast, the UN Secretary General has proposed a five-point plan with takes a truly comprehensive approach to this great endeavor. The key point is his call for negotiations to begin on a Nuclear Weapons Convention. In 2008, the USCM also supported a comprehensive approach when you endorsed the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol.

I remain profoundly grateful to you because U.S. leadership **is** essential. I continue to believe President Obama is both willing and able to provide it, but we have to think carefully about what keeps the US from moving more forcefully on this issue.

It would be easy to say that after Prague, President Obama discovered how difficult it is to make progress on nuclear arms. There is indeed a kernel of truth to this: the piecemeal approach is actually extremely difficult. At each step, one side or the other feels it is getting the short end of the bargain. If they cannot look down the road and see that they will get a fair, secure deal in the end, then they are going to resist cutting the initial deal. A short-sight approach invites delays and misgivings.

However, I want to suggest that the US leadership deficit on this crucial issue is due to another factor. In a democratic society, a president needs to show results if he/she wants to be re-elected and serve another term. President Obama wants to accomplish great things in many different areas of public life. In an ideal world, he could deliver on all of them. In the real world, he can only deliver on those that are politically ripe for action. Thus, it would seem

that, up till now, the President has observed no significant public groundswell demanding a nuclear-weapon-free world. As much as he might wish to lead us there, he does not want to set forth only to find that the troops are not behind him.

You and I know that there is broad public support for ridding the world of nuclear weapons. No doubt President Obama knows this as well. But what political form does this support take? Who represents this opinion across the country? Will strong action against nuclear weapons bring votes in 2012? These are the questions Obama needs to hear answers to; and these are the questions for which YOU mayors can provide answers.

When you and your USCM representatives meet with the President and his advisers, you will have an ambitious agenda. In these hard economic times, you need to be focused to get results that will make a material difference in the life of your citizens. With only a limited amount of time to make your pitch, can you afford to point out to the President that “Cities Are Not Targets!”? Can you afford to reiterate the suggestion in last year’s resolution that the President use the upcoming conference to review the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to launch negotiations for a nuclear-weapon-free world by the year 2020?

Before you say, “NO,” allow me to point out the immense power of saying “YES.” Given the President’s appreciation of the dire needs of cities, just imagine how impressed he (and his aides) would be if you did take the time to say just these few words,

“Mr. President, we want to free our cities from the nuclear threat. If you make the effort at the upcoming NPT Review Conference to put the world on course to a nuclear-weapon-free world in 2020, we will enthusiastically support you. You can count on us!”

And there is another very simple way to add real weight to such a request for leadership. Please become part of the global network of cities that share this goal. I mean, of course, please join Mayors for Peace. We have just launched the most ambitious recruitment drive in the history of cities: the ‘Cities Are Not Targets!’ Membership Drive. By the May NPT Review Conference, we intend to grow from 3500 to 5000 members. I hope that at least 250 of those 5000 will be US cities. US membership stands currently at 150, and many of America’s greatest cities are already members: Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, New Orleans, Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland and Los Angeles. Large or small, you are all welcome in our network.

When we reach 5000, our member mayors will speak on behalf of one billion citizens. Let’s use that to convince President Obama and leaders throughout the world that the time **is truly** ripe for a comprehensive approach to achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Let us – mayors and cities – lead the Velvet Revolution that President Obama called for in Prague!

Please will allow me one further point. President Obama, as I quoted, referred to the special responsibility that accrues to being the sole country to have used a nuclear weapon. I cannot tell you how warmly those few words were received by the citizens of Hiroshima, especially the survivors of 1945, who were just children at the time. But I want to say this: if you are going to take a comprehensive approach to a problem you need to grasp it comprehensively. Hiroshima and Nagasaki are an essential part of this whole; personally visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as past Presidents of the US Conference of Mayors have done, is a natural part of coming to terms with the true scope of the problem.

I was heartened, during his lightning visit to Japan last fall, by President Obama's response to a question about visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He said it would be "meaningful."

He is right. It would be extremely meaningful, so I hope that, working together, we can find a way of encouraging him to make that visit soon. If you have a chance, please assure him that he would receive a warm, deeply respectful reception and a profoundly moving experience. On that you have my word of honor.

Thank you.