



Keynote address

**A World Without Nuclear Weapons:
From Dream to Reality**

By

Angela Kane

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs



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Mayor Matsui, Mayor Taue, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is both a privilege and an honour for any visitor just to come to Hiroshima—and even more so to have an opportunity to speak on the issue of nuclear disarmament at this 8th General Conference of Mayors for Peace.

Of course, the United Nations and Mayors for Peace have long stood on common ground when it comes to nuclear disarmament.

On 5 May 2009, my predecessor, Sergio Duarte, addressed a gathering of Mayors for Peace at the United Nations. He noted that your membership then stood at 2,800 cities in 134 countries. As of this month, your numbers have grown to 5,712 cities—fully double the number 4 years ago—and you are now represented in 157 countries.

This impressive achievement is due to the growing recognition by the public and governments of the importance of nuclear disarmament, and it is also due to the enlightened leadership in your organization, especially from the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I fully understand that as mayors and other representatives of city government, you have many urgent demands from your constituents on a very broad range of issues of daily concern—including issues relating to the economy, jobs, the environment, labour, education, and many other such areas. It is surprising—given all these competing demands—that you have succeeded in raising the public's awareness of the importance of progress in nuclear disarmament.

Yet it really should not be a surprise to find mayors and city governments interested in this issue, because if nuclear weapons are ever used again, cities will likely figure prominently among the likely targets. This means that the horrific effects from the use of such weapons will be faced most immediately by the citizens of cities and their governments, for they are the ones that will have to fight the fires, care for the wounded, bury the dead, and slowly manage the long and difficult process of reconstruction.

One of your ancestors, Senkichi Awaya, was Mayor of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. On that day, he and his family lost their lives due to the atomic bombing. He was the first mayor to have perished in a nuclear attack on a city. How moving it is that 68 years later we are meeting here to demonstrate the solidarity of over 5,000 representatives of cities around the world, all united in the twin common causes of preventing another use of such weapons and of achieving their total elimination.

Of course, your interest as mayors in nuclear disarmament extends far beyond the avoidance of nuclear war. You are also trying to meet the social and economic needs of your people. You keep hearing that funding is not sufficient to meet these needs. Yet when considering the trillions of dollars that have been spent world wide on nuclear weapons, and the estimated additional trillion that is expected to be spent in the coming decade, such a claim only begs the question: have we not better uses for such funds in meeting human needs?

Consider this. In 1998, the U.S. Brookings Institution published a lengthy study¹ on the total historic cost of the nuclear weapons programme of the United States—the figure was \$5.8 trillion. Brookings calculated that this amount—if stacked as one-dollar bills—would go from here to the moon and almost all the way back.

Now consider that this figure was calculated 15 years ago—and it only represents the expenditure in *one* country. This makes nuclear weapons a humanitarian disaster in a double respect: first the devastation they cause when they are used, and second the tragic opportunity costs of diverting vast financial and human resources away from meeting the real needs of citizens.

Overall, global military spending remains quite high—over \$1.7 trillion last year. This is astonishing, given that the world is in a financial crisis. And even though the Cold War ended almost 20 years ago, this spending is actually higher in real terms than during the peak of the Cold War. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute publishes annual estimates of this expenditure. Most recently, they found that while spending did decline last year in some countries, it rose in Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America. Together, members of NATO alone spent a trillion dollars for military purposes last year.

The investment of a small fraction of that expenditure would go far in helping the world to meet its Millennium Development Goals—goals of social and economic development that would be of substantial benefit to the cities of the world. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has drawn global attention to this issue—in his words, “The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded.”

One of the most eloquent statements of this problem came from former US President Dwight Eisenhower, who said in 1953—

*Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.*²

I have emphasized today this issue of military spending because I know that many of you, as Mayors, have indirectly had to pay the price for these wasteful investments—as measured by the number of bridges, roads, schools and hospitals that could not be built due to budget constraints. This all serves to illustrate how far the world has drifted from the solemn words of the UN Charter, whose Article 26 called for the “least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.” It is time we drifted back to the Charter—and to its language on disarmament, the regulation of armaments, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the avoidance of threats or use of force. Is it really so difficult to imagine that this could actually happen? Is global nuclear disarmament really achievable?

In his Message to your 7th General Conference (2009), Secretary-General Ban stated that

¹ Atomic Audit (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1998).

² “The Chance for Peace,” speech to American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, D.C., 16 April 1953.

“A world without nuclear weapons may be distant, but it is no longer just a dream.” He added, “I look forward to continuing to work with governments and global citizens to realize this shared vision.”

Converting this dream into reality will require great political will, and this is growing, thanks to the work of Mayors for Peace and countless other groups working for the common good through disarmament.

Let me be frank here: the obstacles we all face are considerable. Almost 20,000 nuclear weapons reportedly still remain—though the exact number is unknown given the lack of transparency over these various stockpiles. While it is true that large reductions have been declared, they have not been verified. Today, all possessor states have robust, well-funded, long-term programmes underway to modernize their warheads or their delivery systems. The contagious doctrine of nuclear deterrence continues to be maintained by countries representing a majority of the world’s population—and I am referring here to the States possessing such arms along with those covered by the nuclear umbrella through alliance commitments.

Meanwhile, efforts to advance nuclear disarmament have confronted stubborn resistance in each of the three key multilateral arenas that have mandates to make progress in this area: the UN Disarmament Commission, the General Assembly’s First Committee, and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The annual resolution in the General Assembly in support of commencing negotiations on a global nuclear weapons convention, for example, still receives about 50 votes in opposition or in abstention—even though nuclear disarmament negotiations are an explicit obligation in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and are a duty affirmed by the International Court of Justice.

In such an environment, is it surprising that many citizens who genuinely care about eliminating nuclear weapons are frustrated and angry not just about their own future but the future of our planet? Must humanity live forever under the dark shadow of nuclear terror? And if nuclear weapons really do provide security and status, then by what reasoning will it be possible to deprive any country of the right to acquire such weapons? In this sense, the *lack* of disarmament becomes an engine of proliferation, because the division of the world into nuclear haves and have-nots is simply unsustainable—as it has always been, even when there was only one nuclear-weapon state.

Yet this undercurrent of frustration does not tell the whole story. The fact is that people everywhere have consciously chosen not to yield to despair. They have recognized that great challenges require great efforts to overcome them. Thousand mile journeys are not completed by complaining about the road conditions or the heat. They are completed through persistent hard work focused on an unshakable goal. Though compromises and flexibility are certainly required over the selection of the means to achieve that goal, there can be no compromising on the goal itself of achieving global nuclear disarmament.

We are in fact witnessing today a groundswell of public interest in advancing this issue—not just by the peace groups, who have had to bear these burdens for so many years virtually on their own—but now they have the support of mayors, national legislators, environmentalists,

human rights activists, religious leaders, womens groups, lawyers, labour groups, engineers, and countless other sectors of society.

I was pleased to learn that nuclear disarmament has been growing as an interest of mayors in the United States. On 26 June, the U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously adopted a resolution calling for U.S. leadership in the global elimination of nuclear weapons and the redirection of military spending to domestic needs.

On the level of national parliaments, I warmly welcome the work that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has done to advance this cause —through its resolutions, focused gatherings and reports. The subject, “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the contribution of parliaments”, is on the agenda of the IPU Assembly’s next meeting in October—and the Assembly will address this issue again in 2014.

Together, these activities are helping to shape the global debate on nuclear disarmament. Public expectations for progress are becoming clearer and they are being advanced as a higher priority in countries across the globe.

One of the most encouraging signs of progress in recent years has been the growing public awareness of the *humanitarian consequences* from using such weapons, a theme that is helping to strengthen public interest in disarmament. This issue figured prominently at the 2010 Review Conference of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and it has been (or will be) emphasized in three multilateral arenas this year.

First, this theme was the focus of the Oslo conference hosted last March by the government of Norway. Though the five nuclear-weapon States did not attend, over 120 governments participated at that event. That conference provided an opportunity for governments, UN agencies, other international organizations and civil society to analyze the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. In his closing summary, the Foreign Minister of Norway recognized that no State or international body could adequately address the humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation; that nuclear weapons have demonstrated their devastating immediate and long-term effects; and that such effects will not be constrained by national borders, and will have regional and global impacts. In an action signifying that this conference will not be a one-off event, the government of Mexico has announced that it will hold a follow-up meeting to continue this discussion, most likely to be held in the first part of 2014.

The second noteworthy multilateral initiative this year relates to the deliberations in the Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament, which is meeting this summer. This working group was established by a General Assembly resolution on “taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.”³ Its mandate is focused on proposals “for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons”. The Working Group has held two sessions in May and June this year and will hold its final session in August. All UN Member States are entitled to participate and contribute, although the Working Group does not have a negotiating mandate. I would like to note here that Mayors for Peace made a statement at the

³ General Assembly Resolution 67/56, 3 December 2012.

Working Group's first session, as did several other non-governmental organizations. The deliberations have taken place on various panels devoted to issues relating to nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free areas, perspectives on the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a nuclear weapons free world, and the role of parliamentarians in advancing nuclear disarmament. Specific proposals have been submitted in working papers both by Member States and by representatives of civil society. The working group's final report will be finalized in August and submitted to the General Assembly's First Committee in October.

The third multilateral event I would like to note is the High-Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament, which will take place at the General Assembly on 26 September. The resolution creating the Meeting was introduced by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and called for a one-day meeting to "contribute to achieving the goal of nuclear disarmament" and to draw greater attention, at the highest political level, to the priority of nuclear disarmament.⁴ This will be the first such high-level meeting on this particular topic that has never been convened by the General Assembly. While some nuclear-weapon States have expressed doubt over the value added by such a meeting, all are expected to attend. The President of the General Assembly will prepare a summary outcome document of the meeting.

The very fact that such gatherings are continuing to occur is itself an encouraging sign. They symbolize the world community's firm commitment not to give up on this great cause of disarmament. We are continuing to see some interesting new coalitions, civil society initiatives, and imaginative campaigns to move this agenda forward.

Through its resolutions and reports, for example, the International Committee of the Red Cross has been extremely helpful in educating the public and governments about the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. One should not be surprised they would take such an interest. After all, the local head of the ICRC delegation in 1945 was Dr. Marcel Junod, who was one of the first to report on the medical effects of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima.

In a circular sent to its National Societies on 5 September 1945, the ICRC wrote with deep conviction that "The greater the destructive power of war, the greater the necessity—in protest against this reversal of values—to spread the light of humanity, no matter how small, into the infinite darkness."

Yet nobody has more eloquently and meticulously described the terrible human effects of these weapons than the *hibakusha*, who have brought their testimonies to audiences throughout the world. I am proud that the United Nations has recognized the importance of translating these testimonies into many other languages so people everywhere can learn of their first-hand experiences with the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. With the help of universities in Japan and NGOs, my own Office for Disarmament Affairs is trying to expand the audience for such testimonies by making them available through links on our web site.⁵

I am convinced that the deeper the public understands the awful humanitarian

⁴ General Assembly Resolution 67/39, 3 December 2012.

⁵ <http://www.un.org/disarmament/content/slideshow/hibakusha/>.

consequences of these weapons for civilian populations and even future generations—and the exorbitant economic costs of such weapons in the face of real human needs—the greater will be the pressure to eliminate them. Remembering the nightmare of using these weapons is clearly an essential step in moving the public consciousness from a dream of a nuclear-weapon-free world to a reality.

Secretary-General Ban is certainly not one who believes that disarmament is just a dream. He once stated, “Some say nuclear disarmament is utopian, premature, a dream. I say the illusion is that nuclear weapons provide security.”⁶

Unfortunately, the dream theory is not the only argument used by critics of disarmament.

They say disarmament is dangerous, by undermining nuclear alliances and encouraging States to seek their own nuclear weapons once the nuclear umbrella is removed.

They say more urgent priorities exist—some say non-proliferation, other say counter-terrorism.

They say disarmament is irrelevant, because it will have no effect upon what they describe as “rogue states” and “terrorists”.

They say nuclear weapons are valuable in keeping the peace, sustaining order, deterring both nuclear and conventional war, strengthening diplomacy

They say disarmament is unenforceable, given the many challenges of responding to violators.

They say it is unverifiable, given the impossibility of proving the absence of weapons.

They say it would open the door to a new age of conventional wars.

They say nuclear weapons offer cheaper way to prevent war than reliance on conventional weapons alone.

They say nuclear weapons are only dangerous when “in the wrong hands”.

And they say nuclear weapons cannot be “disinvented”.

These twelve standard arguments—let’s call them the “dirty dozen”—have been in circulation almost as long as nuclear weapons have existed, and they continue to appear in editorial commentaries, expert testimony, scholarly journals, and political speeches.

What these arguments fail to do, of course, is to compare the risks associated with the elimination of nuclear weapons with the risks we continue to face in a world with thousands of

⁶ Ban Ki-moon, “The Pursuit of Peace at a Time of Global Transition”, Seoul, 29 October 2012. Available from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sgsm14609.doc.htm> (accessed 11 June 2013).

such weapons. Those risks we face today are much graver than many realize. Consider for a moment that one nuclear missile submarine has roughly eight times the explosive firepower as all the bombs dropped in World War II. The world stood in awe as the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by single bombs—think of the risks in a world with thousands of such weapons, many ready to launch at a moment's notice. Think of the risk of accidents—and there have been many of them, including cases where the high explosives in nuclear weapons have detonated, scattering fissile material over landscapes. There have even been incidents where nuclear weapons have been lost—several remain on ocean floors around the world. There are other risks based on misperceptions or wars based on faulty information—a serious concern that is compounded by the rapidly growing field of cyber warfare. The cost of cleaning up the environmental hazards left over from the production of nuclear weapons will also be enormous, certainly in the tens of billions of dollars—this is a cost not of disarmament, but of possession.

In his address to Mayors for Peace on 4 May 2010, Secretary-General Ban stated a fundamental truth—in his words, “We reduce the risk of nuclear weapons to zero by reducing the number of nuclear weapons to zero.” He added that the United Nations should therefore be “the new ‘ground zero’ for nuclear disarmament.” The reasons are clear. As long as such weapons exist, there will be the deadly risks of wilful or accidental use, risks of proliferation, and risks that terrorists will one day acquire and use such weapons. Atomic bombs beget atomic bombs—this is the sad reality of our times.

All of these considerations help to explain why so many efforts are now underway to create a new reality—a reality of security without nuclear weapons.

Advocates of disarmament fully understand that security must be protected throughout the disarmament process—nobody is seriously proposing disarmament based on blind trust. The process of nuclear disarmament requires strict verification, transparency over both weapons and fissile materials, controls to ensure the irreversibility of commitments, universal membership, and binding legal commitments. After comparing the security benefits of disarmament arrangements satisfying these standards with the risks of a world filled with nuclear weapons, one can see that the genuine realists are those who support disarmament. The critics are the ones relying upon recycled old arguments from their own fantasy world.

You, the members of Mayors for Peace, have certainly had to confront your own critics of your stance on nuclear disarmament. Yet you have fought on, expanded your numbers, reached out to new cities, helped to mobilize a younger generation, stimulated media attention, and your views are no doubt reaching national governments around the world.

You understand the great value of ensuring that official national commitments—in this case disarmament—are deeply rooted in the legal and political systems of countries. Citizens must understand what those commitments are, who has made them, what the benefits they stand to gain from their achievement, and what dangers must be confronted if disarmament does not occur. When it comes to nuclear disarmament, there is no distinction between the global interest and the national interest—disarmament offers the only absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons.

I am therefore very pleased to recognize the fine work that you have done at Mayors for Peace to achieve this great goal and can confirm here today that you certainly have an ally in this great cause at the United Nations. Please accept my best wishes for the success of all your ongoing and future initiatives in this field.