

WMDC

THE WEAPONS OF
MASS DESTRUCTION
COMMISSION

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Notes used

Dr. Hans Blix' presentation of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission's Final Report, 'Weapons of Terror. How to free the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms' at the Institute of European Affairs, Wednesday 13 September 2006.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before the Institute of European Affairs and to speak in Ireland which has consistently championed arms control and disarmament. Ireland, like my own country, Sweden, and other small countries have a natural interest that the rule of law and the operation of international institutions should gradually replace the threat and use of armed force to solve controversies. They sincerely believe that such evolution is in the interest also of the big and the strong.

In the European sphere we can rejoice that such an evolution is taking place. The soil of European states is saturated with the blood shed during millennia of armed conflicts between states, kingdoms, duchies, clans, families. The conflicts in former Yugoslavia showed us that the evolution is not fully accomplished. Yet, the emergence of the European Union is allowing Europe to open a new chapter. Not one in which conflicts disappear but one in which armed conflicts disappear. Europe, I think, has a duty to promote a similar development at the global level.

In the first months of 2003, when I was heading the UN inspections in Iraq, Anna Lindh, the Swedish Foreign Minister who was tragically murdered later that year, phoned me from time to time. She was not only keen to learn what we were doing in Iraq but also to discuss **how Europe could become more active** to prevent a further spread of weapons of mass destruction. Like many Europeans she worried about the clear inclination of the US administration to use armed force. Within the European Union she and other ministers began to work on what became a European Security Strategy and an action plan against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Anna Lindh also took another initiative and I feel sad that she did not live to see the result and make use of it. She asked me in June 2003 to set up and chair an independent international commission to come up with ideas and proposals how the world can free itself of weapons of mass destruction. The Swedish Government was ready to provide money for the Commission but I was free to select the members and the commission and we would be entirely independent from the government.

I was glad to accept Anna Lindh's offer and invited experienced experts from all the continents. The Commission started its work in January 2004 and the report – **Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Weapons** – was presented to the President of the UN General Assembly and the Secretary General of the UN on 1 June this year.

Who was the report written for?

A broad audience – from policy makers and officials and experts in foreign and defense ministries to think tanks, journals, media and the interested public. It provides a comprehensive **overview** of the problems which the continued existence of WMD pose to the world, analyses these problems and presents 60 recommendations. About half of the report deals with nuclear weapons.

When the report urges the **outlawing** of nuclear weapons some may feel it looks just like another ambitious blue print for a better world. Well, it is ambitious but also hard-headed and fully aware of where we are now. The use, production and stockpiling of biological and chemical weapons **are** already **outlawed** by international conventions in force. These bans need to be universally accepted and effectively implemented and the Report presents recommendations in this regard.

In my view there need be **nothing woolly** about proposals which lead toward the outlawing nuclear weapons, however great the obstacles may be today. One such proposal is bringing into force the comprehensive **test ban** treaty which has been on the table for a long time. It would just require a change of heart in a few states. A **cut off** in the production of fissile material for weapons purposes is another such proposal. If a current US draft were amended to contain a mechanism for effective international verification, it might well become viable.

Although the report contains as many as **60 recommendations** it does aim to focus on the larger issues and not at examining the myriad of questions, which may be on the government desks right now or next month.

The central message of the report is that in the last decade the arms control and **disarmament process has stagnated** and must be revived and pursued in parallel with the efforts to prevent the spread of WMD to further states and to terrorist movements which are the main subject of the current international discussion. From that discussion one might get the impression that the 27.000 nuclear weapons, which are deemed to exist, pose few problems and that only those that may be developed outside eight known have states are dangerous. While the Commission recognizes that nuclear weapons may be particularly dangerous in some hands, it sees them as a threat in whosever hands they are.

It might have been expected that arms control and disarmament would become easier after the end of the Cold War. The opposite seems to be true.

During the Cold War the nuclear arsenals of the US and the Soviet Union would have sufficed to destroy human civilization several times. Public opinion mobilized against the madness of the arms races and despite the intense political and ideological competition each superpower was ready to accept some limitations on itself in order to achieve limitations on the other and on states generally.

The **Partial Test Ban** treaty was concluded and largely stopped radioactive fallout from nuclear tests; the **Biological Weapons Convention** prohibited the production and possession of B-weapons and the **Chemical Weapons Convention** was negotiated though it was concluded only after the Cold War.

In the **Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968** a fundamental global bargain was made and Ireland was instrumental in bringing it about. **Non-nuclear** weapon states parties committed themselves not to acquire these weapons and **five nuclear** weapon states came to commit themselves to negotiate toward nuclear disarmament.

The NPT has been – and remains – of tremendous value. Without it the nuclear weapons might have spread to many more than the eight or nine states, which now have them. However, the treaty and the fundamental bargain are **under strain** today. Iraq, Libya and North Korea ignored their non-proliferation pledges; Iran is under suspicion to do the same; and the five nuclear weapon states parties are not living up to their pledges to move to nuclear disarmament.

The situation seems paradoxical. The deep ideological conflicts of the Cold War are gone and there are no significant territorial controversies between the great powers. Yet, although reductions are taking place in overstuffed nuclear arsenals these are still, as I mentioned, estimated to number **some 27.000 weapons**.

What is even worse, the commitments to further disarmament made by the nuclear weapon states in 1995, when the non-nuclear weapon states accepted to extend the treaty and their pledges indefinitely, are being ignored. For instance, the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty**, which was concluded in 1996 after decades of negotiations, has been left in limbo and will remain so unless the US and China and some other states ratify it.

Not surprisingly the **2005 Review Conference** of the Non Proliferation Treaty ended in bitterness with many non-nuclear weapon states feeling cheated. The **World Summit** at the UN in September 2005 was unable to agree on a single line regarding arms control, disarmament or non-proliferation and the **Geneva Conference on Disarmament**, has been unable for about a decade to agree on a work program.

Sadly, in the last ten years we have been witnessing not only a stagnation in the sphere of arms control and disarmament but also an attribution of greater importance to nuclear weapons and interest in their development:

- Several nuclear weapon states no longer give pledges against a **first use** of nuclear weapons;

- The development of a **missile shield** in the US is perceived by China and Russia as a step potentially allowing the US to threaten them, while creating immunity for the US;
- The development and testing of **new types of nuclear weapons** is urged by influential groups in the US; in the UK many expect a government decision about a renewal of the nuclear weapons program, stretching it far beyond 2020;
- The stationing of **weapons in space** is considered in the US; if it were to occur, other states might follow and threats may arise to the world's peaceful uses of space and the enormous investments made in them.

While these are intensely worrisome developments the current global discussion is **focused on some other risks**, notably that **Iran** and possibly other states could break out from the NPT and acquire nuclear weapons; that **North Korea** may have such weapons; and that **terrorists** may seek weapons of mass destruction.

It is easy to recognize the seriousness of these matters and the importance of countering the risks. The WMDC discusses them – not least the cases of DPRK and IRAN – in some detail. However, it is hard to see that the development of new types of nuclear weapons could be meaningful to counter terrorism or dissuading states which might be bent on nuclear proliferation. A boosting of the nuclear option in states that have them combined with military threats seem far more likely to **encourage** nuclear proliferation in states which feel threatened than dissuading them from such proliferation. Preaching arms control to others while practicing rearmament is not a recipe for success.

The report of the Commission submits that each state which has acquired nuclear weapons has thereby taken on a responsibility and has the duty at all times to consider the question of relinquishing these weapons.

The UK is soon going to decide on its nuclear weapon program. We hear it argued that the weapons may be required because the future is uncertain. True... But this is true for other states as well. For Spain, Italy, Germany, Japan, Brazil, Indonesia...

There is much talk about the risk that some non-nuclear weapon state might “**break out from the Non Proliferation Treaty**”, but little mention of the effects of a nuclear weapon state “**breaking out from the nuclear club**”. **Only South Africa has done it so far.**

I would hazard that a UK decision to lapse its nuclear weapon program would get a high note in the history of humanity. Sadly, a decision to continue the program would get no note at all.

What needs to be done?

After the two world wars in the 20th century new global orders were sought. After the Cold War the whole world – including the great powers – needs to **get serious about seeking security more** through cooperation, **development, the rule of law and arms control and disarmament** and less through military threats and force. The disasters in

Iraq and Lebanon show the consequences of an **exaggerated belief in and reliance on military surgery**.

The war in Iraq also shows us the consequences of **ignoring international fact-finding**, such as the inspections of the UN, the IAEA and OPCW (for chemical weapons). Rarely have the reports of international fact-finders, views of NGOs and public opinion been as ignored as before the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

The world was told that the invasion would lead to the **“moment of truth”**. **It did** and the truth was that there were no weapons of mass destruction! Most had been destroyed already in the early 1990s. In 2003 a state and a people were thus **sentenced** to war and invasion on erroneous grounds, on “faith-based” – even “fake-based” – intelligence. A brutal dictator was toppled. The rest remains a tragedy. How could it happen?

During the 1990s real knowledge about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programs had been growing through **international inspections**. This process of search for the truth sadly ended in 1998, when the international inspectors were withdrawn. A few spies and many defectors became chief sources of information and misleading reports were accepted by governments that looked for arguments for armed action more than truth.

This is sad history, but one important **lesson** to draw from the Iraq tragedy is that **international professional inspection**, such as it has been practiced under the UN, the IAEA and the Chemical Weapons Convention, is an important **tool in the search for truth**. Such inspection is in nobody’s pocket, it operates openly and legally and under the control of the international community. The states of the world should recognize that these activities provide **a vitally needed impartial search for the truth**. In the view of the **WMD Commission** governments need not choose between their own national intelligence and international verification. They have the results of both before themselves. If these results point in different directions it should be a sign of warning.

Many steps apart from a strengthening and greater reliance on international inspection, can and should be taken. Let me cite just a few examples from the **Report of the WMD Commission**

- The elimination of **chemical and biological weapons** must be completed and the conventions strengthened;
- The **march away from the nuclear option** must be resumed. Of immediate importance in is:
- The ratification of the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty** by the US and other states. Bringing this treaty into force will send a resounding signal that the whole world is again moving away from these weapons. It will also impede a further qualitative development of nuclear weapons;
- The conclusion of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons (**FMCT**) and providing for effective international verification. By ending the production of weapons grade uranium and plutonium and gradually dismantling weapons we can slowly reduce the existing pile of nuclear weapons and be sure that no new piles are growing up.

- The full use of the **potential of the United Nations** and the Secretary-General to help solve controversies.

Let me end by paying tribute to Kofi Annan for the outstanding way he has performed. Let me end by also noting that, while the UN Charter, drafted at the end of World War II, does not rule out the use of military force in some situations its authors had seen the effects of war, favoured disarmament and were not trigger happy.