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As delivered

Statement by Dr. Hans Blix at the UN Conference of NGOs
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I appreciate the opportunity to address this forum of non-governmental organizations. Many NGOs provide help that is direct and vitally needed and many NGOs speak in an equally direct way to promote and defend **common** global needs and values. Governments almost inevitably see global issues through the lenses of their national interests.

I shall take up **two issues** in which NGOs are doing great work and in which I think they may do even more. Both have vital importance for **human security**.

- Demanding facts and transparency: Getting **truth** on the table.
- Waking up the world to the reality that the **process of arms control and disarmament** has stagnated and must be revived.

In his New Year's message this year, the Pope spoke of 'peace through truth'. To solve controversies we must seek an accurate picture and understanding of them. Without the right diagnoses, how can we find the right therapy?

The search for truth is not easy.

NGOs can and do render invaluable service by critically examining information and governments' actions – and inaction.

Rarely has the need for critical thinking been demonstrated as clearly to us as after the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and rarely have the reports of international fact-finders, views of NGOs and public opinion been as ignored as before that invasion.

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. It was not 'peace through truth' but '**war through untruth**'. 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 This process of search for the truth sadly ended in 1998, when the international inspectors were withdrawn.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.

There is a strange irony that Saddam could probably have avoided the war, if the international inspectors, whom he wanted out, had been enabled to stay in Iraq and continue their reporting after 1998. There is another irony that the Alliance of Willing states would probably have refrained from their invasion in 2003 and avoided their current dilemma, if they had paid more attention to the reporting of the international inspections, which resumed late in 2002.

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**.

The **second issue** I want to call your attention to is that of arms control and **disarmament**. From the time of the Hague Peace Conferences of the 19th century to the present many NGOs have campaigned against the use of indiscriminate and particularly cruel weapons and have had arms control and disarmament on their agendas. Indeed, how can we think of **human security** and sustainable development or a humane international community without an intense concern about the use of armed force, the flood of small caliber weapons, the innumerable land mines that remain lethal, the cluster bombs and the continued existence of **weapons of terror**?

A few months ago, the independent international **Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction**, which I had the honour to chair, presented a unanimously adopted report – “Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms”. Its central message 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. NGOs need to renew and reinforce their work to push this process.

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. **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 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 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. The **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty**, concluded in 1996 after decades of negotiations, is 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 that need to be recognized and addressed by the NGO community 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. 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.

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 human security through cooperation, development, the rule of law and arms control and disarmament**. The security of states and people must be sought more through cooperation and negotiation 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.

Many steps need, can and should be taken and NGO:s may help. 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.