

19 Abril 2007

**International Conference on**  
**“A comprehensive approach towards**  
**nuclear disarmament”**

**European Parliament, 19 April 2007**

**INTERVENTION BY ANA GOMES**

- Let me start by welcoming everyone to the European Parliament; it is a pleasure and an honour for this institution to host today's event;
- This initiative is a good example of how the European Parliament and civil society organizations can join forces to tackle some of the most difficult issues of our time; on the NGO side, a dynamic 'coalition of the willing' got together and made this conference possible: they are *Abolition 2000*, *ISIS Europe*, *Mayors for Peace*, *Olof Palme International Center* and the *Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament*;
- Since most of you will have the opportunity in the next few hours to hear specialists from all over the world addressing in depth such issues as the EU's role in the ongoing struggle to save and strengthen the NPT, the proper balance between non-proliferation and disarmament, and the way ahead for nuclear disarmament, I will limit myself to **a brief overview of these topics**;

- A few days from the 2007 PrepCom, the mood is far from optimistic; the NPT, together with multilateralism as a whole, has suffered tremendous blows from all sides since 2000, and it remains to be seen whether we are starting to see light at the end of the tunnel - **the PrepCom will be a good test;**
- In November 2006, **Kofi Annan held a memorable, and much-quoted, speech about nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament** at Princeton University. He described the lack of progress - "*mutually assured paralysis*" has replaced "*mutually assured destruction.*" He emphasized that "*we are asleep at the controls of a fast-moving aircraft*" and that "*unless we wake up and take control, the outcome is all too predictable*";
- But what was most inspiring in the former Secretary-General's speech was his **plea not to let the essential bargain at the core of the NPT be hijacked by the debate between 'disarmament-first', or 'non-proliferation-first' approaches**: Kofi Annan was right when he said that **this polarization is "sterile, counterproductive, and based on false dichotomies;"**
- What does this mean in practice?
- **It means that the NPT needs to be put back into the centre of international discourse about nuclear weapons: in the same way that Iran, North Korea, or anybody else, must not be allowed to legitimize their own nuclear adventures by hiding behind the unwillingness of the nuclear weapons states to fulfil their disarmament commitments, the P-5 cannot go on pretending that as long as there are threats to their security and nuclear proliferation, their own nukes are untouchable;**

- Or, in other words, and quoting Kofi Annan, while "*lack of progress on disarmament is no excuse for not addressing the dangers of proliferation*", "*it would be much easier to confront proliferators, if the very existence of nuclear weapons was universally acknowledged as dangerous and ultimately illegitimate*";
- I don't see this conference as an effort to downplay the danger of nuclear proliferation, to consider it secondary to disarmament, or to portray it as a "*problem of the nuclear haves*"; I see it rather as an **opportunity to move the debate about nuclear weapons away from an approach based on threat perceptions and geo-political and strategic considerations alone, and back to where it really belongs: to the legal framework of the NPT, and to the ultimate purpose of the 'general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control', as Article VI of the NPT puts it;**
- The annoying thing is that we know **exactly what to do and which practical steps we have to take to gradually turn this utopian-sounding goal into reality**; the '13 practical steps for nuclear disarmament' were agreed to as recently as in 2000 and they list unilateral and multilateral initiatives that can move us all closer to the ultimate goal of a nuclear-weapons free world;
- To the '13 steps', we could add another idea that is immediately relevant: spreading a web of **negative security assurances shielding non-nuclear states from nuclear threats and maybe even anchor these assurances in a treaty**;
- The point of gradual nuclear disarmament **cannot be to just reduce the nuclear arsenals** at the disposal of the states holding them: for example, during the **short and shallow debate** about the update and renewal of the

Trident system, the Blair government boasted that the UK had cut its nuclear weapons explosive capacity by 70% since the end of the Cold War and drastically reduced the level of readiness of its remaining nuclear arsenal; it also pledged to cut the number of operational warheads by 20% to below 160 - a mere trifle, they say...

- But what became clear from the statements made by the Prime Minister, his putative successor and their Tory allies, **was that nuclear weapons are to remain at the heart of the UK's defence doctrine for another generation, in a clear indication that the commitments made at the 2000 RevCon are dead and buried, at least what London is concerned;**
- In other words, how can the nuclear-weapons states expect to be taken seriously when they **claim credit for having done the obvious** (reducing their massive and useless arsenals after the end of the Cold War to a 'mere' 12.000 actively deployed nuclear weapons), while at the same time **avoiding their legal obligation to plan for long-term disarmament;**
- What is now **necessary** and **urgent** is to follow up on the **quantitative reduction of arsenals with a qualitative, doctrinal rethinking of the role of nuclear weapons in the 21st century,** because - quite apart from the powerful ethical and legal arguments against these weapons, **what justifies their use,** either passively, or actively?;
- Let us take a quick look at the European Security Strategy and the main threats Europe is facing at the moment (which are global threats, indeed) : terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional instability, failed states and organized crime - **there isn't one, NOT ONE, of these threats that can be counteracted by a nuclear arsenal - besides**

**immoral and on the long run, illegal, these weapons are useless;**

- In this particular field - the fundamental rethinking of the need for nukes - we have gone backwards, with the **Bush administration leading the drive for a new doctrine lowering the operational threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, while at the same time developing smaller, and more 'useable' nuclear weapons;** the only good news came from Congress, which saved the US from itself when it cut funding to the bunker-buster programme...
- In short, with the **US in a deep crisis about their place in the world, and the EU a hostage to the nuclear posturing of France and the UK,** wise leadership and effective multilateralism in the field of nuclear disarmament have been in short supply in the last few years;
- In the European Parliament, we try hard to pass resolutions that accurately reflect what we feel is the ***real European consensus about nuclear disarmament;*** in the EP's resolution of 14 March 2007 on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, we urged (and I quote)

*"the Council Presidency to promote at the NTP PrepCom a number of disarmament initiatives based on the 'Principles and objectives of Nuclear Non-Proliferations and Disarmament' agreed upon at the 1995 NPT Review Conference and the '13 Practical Steps' agreed unanimously at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which must be improved upon and implemented in order to make progress and to avoid regress or standstill"*

- Unfortunately, the EU's **Common Foreign and Security Policy doesn't cover Member States'**

**nuclear policies** and that is why there is a **fundamental imbalance in the EU's role in the world in this field;**

- **Let me explain:** on one hand, the birth of an 'EU Strategy against the Proliferation of WMD' in December 2003 and the appointment of Annalisa Giannella as Solana's Personal Representative on non-proliferation of WMD are welcome steps and the EU is playing a fundamental role in strengthening the IAEA, supporting the CTBTO Preparatory Committee and promoting the universalization of the NPT;
- **But as long as this European Strategy is only turned outwards; as long as disarmament is only to be pursued outside the borders of the Union; in other words, as long as London and Paris continue to see this Strategy as something that doesn't concern their own nuclear arsenals, the EU will continue to be a flawed defender of the NPT and it will continue to fight non-proliferation with one hand tied behind its back;**
- Global leadership in this as in other fields comes at a price: and Europe doesn't seem to be willing to pay that price just yet;
- You will of course hear more about the role of the EU in the implementation of the NPT in a few hours;
- Let me just finish by saying that there will be time for questions after the intervention of Mr Gareth Evans;
- Mr Evans - Gareth - of course, hardly needs to be introduced: he has been the President of the International Crisis Group for over seven years, after having spent 21 years in Australian politics; he was Australian Foreign Minister between 1988 and 1996

and - most relevant for today's discussions - he was a member of the Blix Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction;

- Gareth, go ahead!