

Mr Kelvin Thompson MP
Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Thompson

The UN Association of Australia wishes to make the following submission to the JSCOT Inquiry into nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The purpose of this submission is to discuss one of the two greatest threats to the survival of humankind, the risk of the use of nuclear weapons, the other being climate change.

Structure of the submission

- Reasons for alarm
- Encouraging signs
- Support for nuclear disarmament
- Steps towards nuclear disarmament
- Australian policy

A. **A dozen reasons for alarm** about the state of nuclear armaments and nuclear strategy in many countries are mentioned.

1. There are a total of more than 25,000 nuclear weapons (NW) in existence.¹ At the beginning of 2008 10,200 were deployed, 4,100 by the US and 5,200 by Russia. Each warhead has a destructive capacity far greater than that of the two 20 kiloton bombs which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The standard nuclear warhead used on US Trident submarine-launched ballistic missiles has a yield of up to 100 kilotons. During the Cold War the Soviet Union manufactured and tested NW with yields of over 50 megatons, 2,500 more powerful than the Hiroshima bombs.
2. Most people no longer think about this issue, both because it is too horrible to do so, and also because the world has lived for 63 years with the existence of nuclear weapons, their use has not been repeated and there is some confidence that no one would be silly enough to do so again. For example, although the US possesses about 10,000 nuclear warheads of which about 5,700 are active and operational, more than half of the respondents to a recent American opinion survey thought their country had fewer than 200.
3. The US and Russia still have a total of about 2,500 of their nuclear forces on high alert so that they could launch a strike within 15 minutes. While such a possibility is remote, many experts are concerned about the command and control systems that depend on complex electronic communication and information. Technical failures, misperception, and miscommunication happen in even the best maintained systems. Such errors could lead to an accidental launch of an attack which had been already programmed as a response to an attack. Four nuclear false alarms have been documented, in 1979, 1980, 1983 and

1995 when either the US or Soviet/Russian forces were placed on the highest alert and missile crews were given preliminary launch warnings. There continue to be risks of mistakes: 'On 29 and 30 August 2007 six cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads were loaded on a US Air Force plane, flown across the country and unloaded. For 36 hours no one knew where the warheads were or even that they were missing' report a bipartisan US panel of American international relations celebrities including George Shultz, Sam Nunn and Henry Kissinger.

4. Nuclear weapons are still included in active military strategic doctrine. The US 2002 Nuclear Posture Review declared that nuclear weapons 'provide credible military options to deter a wide range of threats', including chemical and biological weapons, as well as 'surprising military developments'. This new concept was put into operation early in 2004 and involves as the Atomic Scientists say 'the quick use of even nuclear weapons to destroy "time urgent targets".' This doctrine was reaffirmed in the strategy issued in March 2006, and is a rationalisation for unilateral pre-emptive attack by the US. One expression of this pre-emptive doctrine is what the US calls 'counter-proliferation', a policy envisaging the unilateral use of force as a chief means of dealing with perceived nuclear or other threats from, for example, Iran and North Korea. The unilateralist approach of the US is a direct assault on the multilateralist basis of the UN Charter which all but a few countries continue to support.
5. The bargain at the heart of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is being broken: there is only a little action at present by any of the five nuclear powers which are party to the Treaty, who pledged 'the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals' under the NPT, to reduce the number or capacity of their nuclear forces. The current US Reliable Replacement Warhead program aims to 'enhance the explosive energy provided by the primary stage of a NW'.¹ China's strategic nuclear forces have been held steady at about two dozen single-warhead missiles for many years, but China is engaged in a conventional military modernisation program and this could have implications for nuclear strategy. The UK is engaged in upgrading its Trident submarine capacity. Russia has resumed nuclear armed bomber flights.
6. Horizontal proliferation continues: Israel is estimated to have between 100 and 250 NWs: President Carter says 150. India and Pakistan not only have NW but continue to work on them and Pakistan contributed to proliferation of nuclear technology, one of the factors which has apparently enabled North Korea to acquire them and perhaps to increasing Iran's capacity to build them.
7. Only two of the nuclear weapons states (NWS) have declared a no-first-use policy, China and India. This means that each of the US, UK, Russia, France, Pakistan and Israel have not undertaken to refrain from using NW unless they are attacked with NW first. The Blix Report notes that 'High representatives of nuclear-armed states have recently alluded in precisely calculated ambiguity to a readiness actually to use nuclear weapons'. p37
8. Led by the Bush Administration, and supported by the UK and the previous Australian Government, the international rule of law was undermined by the invasion of Iraq without there being threatened with invasion or the agreement of the Security Council. This has undermined the significance of NW treaties amongst others.
9. Keeping the weapons out of the hands of terrorists is vital. It is most unlikely that terrorist groups could build and manage the major infrastructure that would be required to produce enriched uranium or plutonium for weapons. However weapons-grade material could be stolen. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) maintains an Illicit Trafficking Database which has identified 662 incidents of theft, 18 involving highly enriched uranium

¹ Sidney D. Drell and James E. Goodby, *What are Nuclear Weapons For? Recommendations for Restructuring US Strategic Nuclear Forces*, Arms Control Association Report, Revised and Updated, October 2007, p19

or plutonium, including in a few cases kgms of material. The Cooperative Threat Reduction program between the US and Russia has found, consolidated and secured about half of Russia's nuclear bombs and fissile material during the last decade. But bureaucratic and legal disputes and inadequate funding by the US has frequently slowed the process. Also the problem of unsecured fissile material is not confined to Russia.

10. There is a stalemate in multilateral disarmament negotiations. At the 2000 NPT review conference the five nuclear states party to the Treaty gave an 'unequivocal undertaking ... to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.' The Bush Administration's backing away from this commitment was a major cause of the deadlock at the 2005 NPT review conference. The 2005 Review Conference of the NPT failed to even agree on an agenda. Preparations are under way for the 2010 Review conference but little progress has yet been made. In previous decades, bilateral negotiations between the two superpowers made some progress, but substantial reductions of nuclear weapons by the two major nuclear powers have stalled. The START Treaty expires in 2009.
11. Ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) has stalled. The CTBT was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 1996 and as of April 2006 176 states had signed the Treaty with 132 having ratified, but it has not yet entered into force. The Treaty only enters into force 180 days after 44 designated states involved in nuclear activities have ratified it. Of these, only 34 have so far ratified. Of the ten remaining, seven have signed but not ratified including China, Indonesia, Iran and Israel and three have neither signed nor ratified – India, North Korea and Pakistan. President Clinton was the first leader to sign the CTBT in 1996 but in 1999 the US Senate refused to consent to ratification. The Blix Commission argues that the single most important step towards revitalising non-proliferation and disarmament would be ratification of the CTBT by all states that have NW and US ratification would lead the way, but the Bush Administration refused to do so. President Obama supported ratification when campaigning.
12. The Director of the IAEA Mohamed ElBaradei says that up to 30 countries have the capacity to build nuclear weapons quickly and many of them have stronger motivation, so a fourth wave of horizontal proliferation is possible unless decisive action is taken by all nuclear states. A fourth wave of vertical proliferation is under way with the modernisation of nuclear weapons being undertaken in the US and that is being planned in the UK. There have recently even been murmurings from an occasional Australian about exploring the possibility. The Bush Administration seems to have ceased to be concerned to stop proliferation amongst friends and to have been only concerned about denying nuclear weapons to its adversaries.

The UN Summit held in September 2005 could not agree on a single conclusion relating to disarmament or non-proliferation. The authoritative Report of the Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction (which was very helpful during the preparation of this lecture and the recommendations of which are included in your reading pack) says that 'It is time to wake up to the awesome reality that many of the old threats continue to hang over the world and that many new ones have emerged'. p22

Judith Wright articulates perfectly one of the corrupting features of nuclear weapons.

The will to power destroys the power to will.
The weapon made, we cannot help but use it;
it drags us with its own momentum still.

The power to kill compounds the need to kill.
Grown out of hand, the heart cannot refuse it;
the will to power undoes the power to will.

Though as we strike we cry 'I did not choose it',
it drags us with its own momentum still.
In one stroke we win the world and lose it.
The will to power destroys the power to will.²

For all these reasons and others the Board of Directors of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* announced in January 2007 that they were moving the minute hand of the 'Doomsday Clock' from seven minutes to midnight to five minutes to midnight. They said:

We stand at the brink of a second nuclear age. Not since the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has the world faced such perilous choices. North Korea's recent test of a nuclear weapon, Iran's nuclear ambitions, a renewed US emphasis on the military utility of nuclear weapons, the failure to adequately secure nuclear materials, and the continued presence of some 26,000 nuclear weapons in the United States and Russia are symptomatic of a larger failure to solve the problems posed by the most destructive technology on Earth. ... We seek to warn the world that this level of danger has escalated precipitously.

The Atomic Scientists note that with porous borders, rapid communication spreading technical knowledge, and the potential for dual use of nuclear reactors for both production of power and for refining of fissile material major new challenges face the international community. The ease with which Pakistani nuclear scientists were able to provide nuclear technologies to Libya, North Korea and Iran is a clear example, and so too is the presumed provision of technologies and equipment to Israel.

B. Encouraging Signs

There are also encouraging signs which reduce the sense of impending crisis.

1. There has been no use of NW in war since 1945.
2. US and Russia have withdrawn and dismantled some 40,000 NW since the end of the Cold War, reducing the total from a peak of around 65,000 to the current 25,000 or so, and cuts have also been made from the much smaller stocks of both the UK and France.
3. Most states have adhered to the NPT. Many states with the capacity to make or acquire NW have decided not to do so, Australia amongst them. Others have given up NWs altogether - Belarus, Kazakhstan, South Africa and the Ukraine – or NW programs – Argentina, Brazil and Libya. A US National Intelligence Estimate released in December 2007 concluded 'with high confidence' that Iran had halted its NW program in the autumn of 2003 and had not resumed it.
4. Nuclear Free Zones are now in place in most of the Southern Hemisphere. NWs are also outlawed in space and in Antarctica.
5. The Partial Test-Ban Treaty and the moratorium on under-ground testing remain in force even though CTBT has not been ratified by all required states. The CTBT secretariat is sufficiently operational to have undertaken a major verification test at Palapatinsk during September 2008.
6. At the NPT review conference in 2000 nuclear-weapons states made an 'unequivocal undertaking' to meet their obligations and eliminate all nuclear weapons. Thirteen practical steps for nuclear disarmament were agreed at that conference including:
 - early entry into force of the CTBT

- a moratorium on testing until the CTBT becomes operative
- conclusion of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a verifiable fissile material treaty within 5 years
- entry into force of START II and conclusion of START III; and
- reaffirmation that the ultimate objective is general and complete nuclear disarmament under effective international control

C. **Support for Nuclear Disarmament has been growing:** Many authoritative forums and people have called for complete nuclear disarmament. Eight examples follow:

1. The International Court of Justice concluded in 1996 that 'There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith, and bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.'
2. The Canberra Commission established at Gareth Evan's initiative wrote that 'The proposition that nuclear weapons can be retained and never used – accidentally or by decision – defies credibility. ... Nuclear weapons have long been understood to be too destructive and non-discriminatory to secure discrete objectives on the battlefield.'
3. The Blix Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction recommended abolition of NWs as the necessary goal for preventing their use.
4. Margaret Beckett, when UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, said in a major speech in Washington in June 2007 that the eventual abolition of NWs is in all of our interests and that 'Believing that the eventual abolition of NW is possible can act as a spur for action on disarmament'. She also said that the UK Government has reduced its operationally available warheads by nearly half over the last 10 years and will reduce them by a further 20 per cent.
5. The UK Government commissioned scientists at the British Atomic Weapons Establishment a couple of years ago to test measures required for verifiable elimination of NWs. The UK is also hosting meetings of verification experts from NW states to discuss development of verification technologies.
6. Biological and chemical weapons abolition treaties have been negotiated, ratified by most countries, and are being implemented. Negotiation of a NW convention is already supported by 125 countries at the UN.
7. As is well known, on 4 January 2007 George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn published an article in the *Wall Street Journal* advocating a world free of nuclear weapons. They wrote that mutual deterrence is decreasingly effective when more countries and possibly even terrorists acquire nuclear weapons or the capacity to make them. They proposed a joint enterprise with other nuclear countries, to achieve the goal of complete nuclear disarmament through a series of 'agreed and urgent steps' starting with increasing the warning time of deployed nuclear weapons.

Joe Biden said 'the WSJ op-ed is a vitally important statement. It defines a new centre in American politics, where realist conservative Republicans and tough minded Democrats find common ground'.³ Jessica Mathews commented that the op-ed represented a paradigm shift: 'on a Nixon goes to China scale of 1 to 100', she said, 'I think this article rated about a 98'. The article renewed motivation on Capitol Hill. In December 2007 Congress cut all funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead, and the Defense Authorisation Bill for 2008 maintains that the US should reaffirm its commitment to Article VI of the NPT. Barack Obama cosponsored with Republican Senator Chuck Hagel legislation supporting ratification of the CTBT and negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

In a second article in January 2008 these four horsemen opposed to an apocalypse strengthened their advocacy by commending 'the importance of the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons as a guide to our thinking about nuclear policies'. They described their stepped confidence-building measures in more detail and concluded that 'Without the vision of moving toward zero, we will not find the essential cooperation required to stop our downward spiral'.

8. These articles by such eminent policy leaders create political space for others to take up the issue and the US presidential candidates did so. Barack Obama has said repeatedly that 'I will set and seek the goal of a world with no nuclear weapons.' He went on to say in January 2008 'We will always maintain a strong deterrent as long as nuclear weapons exist. But we will move down the long road toward eliminating nuclear weapons by securing all loose nuclear materials within four years; stopping the development of new nuclear weapons; working with Russia to take US and Russian ballistic missiles off hair trigger alert; seeking dramatic reductions in US and Russian stockpiles of NW and material; and setting a goal to expand the US-Russian ban in intermediate-range missiles so that the agreement is global'. He said in Berlin a few weeks ago that 'This is the moment when we must renew the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.' J Peter Scoblic, the executive editor of *The New Republic* writes that 'any move toward nuclear disarmament will require presidential leadership'.⁴

Steps Towards Nuclear Disarmament

If men can develop weapons that are so terrifying as to make the thought of global war include almost a sentence for suicide, you would think that man's intelligence and his comprehension ... would include also his ability to find a peaceful solution.

President Eisenhower, 1956

After considering all these issues it seems to make sense to aim for a NW Convention (NWC) which establishes the process of achieving total abolition of NW. As long as any state has nuclear weapons other states will want them too. The Canberra Commission wrote 'NW are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable: it cannot be sustained.' The bargain at the heart of the NPT is inherently unstable.

The Blix Commission states, 'A key challenge is to dispel the perception that outlawing NW is a utopian goal. A Nuclear Disarmament Treaty is achievable and can be reached through careful, sensible and practical measures. Benchmarks should be set, definitions agreed, timetables drawn up and agreed upon and transparency requirements agreed.' Blix p109

A Model NWC has been drafted by an expert group of lawyers associated with the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (which was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for advocacy of nuclear disarmament) which would Prohibit the Development, Testing, Production, stockpiling, Use and Threat of Use of NW and so Eliminate them. It is published as *Securing Our Survival: the Case for a Nuclear Weapons Convention*, and has been supplied to the Committee.

It could make tactical sense to aim for such a treaty because such negotiations could leap over entrenched blockages which have impeded disarmament during the last decade or so. This draft Convention was tabled in the UN General Assembly in December 2007 by Costa Rica and Malaysia and has been presented to a number of other international conclaves including a meeting in Dublin in March 2008 of non-NWS hosted by the Government of Ireland. There is widespread support for such a treaty, including in the US where 70 per cent of respondents to one survey supported signing an international treaty to reduce and eliminate all NW.

It is vital that governments take collective responsibility for making international nuclear disarmament machinery work including mechanisms to verify compliance, for securing nuclear weapons and weapons-useable material from non-state actors, and for supporting the

International Atomic Energy Agency in its critical mission of monitoring fissile material and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Incremental steps towards outlawing nuclear weapons would have to include:

1. Taking all NW off high-alert status
2. Making deep reductions in numbers of weapons. Negotiation of another bilateral agreement between the US and Russia sharply reducing their stockpiles of NW is crucial. This is essential to fulfilment of their NPT commitments.
3. Prohibiting the production of fissile material
4. Urging all nuclear states to make no-first-use pledges are vital steps.
5. Ratification of the CTBT
6. Negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty
7. Sustained, detailed work on verification capacity is centrally important. A NWC could only be successfully negotiated if a completely effective verification regime were available.
8. Revision of nuclear doctrines, the plans and principles about how nuclear forces are configured and employed. At the heart of these doctrines has been the concept of deterrence, the idea of Mutual Assured Destruction – MAD – during the last three decades of the Cold War. Some argue that this prevented war then; others that other factors such as lack of a rationale for war were the reason. However deterrence does not discourage proliferation. The nuclear deterrence doctrine remains in active use despite the Bush-Putin Declaration in November 2001 that 'neither country regards the other as an enemy or threat'.
9. A categorical declaration by NWS of no first use

An attachment to this submission summarises the important Adelphi Paper by George Perkovich and James M Acton entitled *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* which discusses in much more detail the steps required to move towards nuclear disarmament.

Australia's role

1. Political leadership is required. The Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has used the political opportunity created by the four horsemen to cooperate with the Japanese Government in establishing the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, both former Foreign Ministers of their countries are to be Co-Chairs. The title of the Commission suggests that not only is the purpose to re-energise global negotiation and decision-making about nuclear weapons but also to restate the case for nuclear disarmament and to make recommendations about how that could be motivated and achieved. The Commission is to prepare a preliminary report before the NPT Review Conference in 2010 and a second final report after the NPT Review Conference in May 2010. Strengthening political will is the principal task.
2. Rigorous scrutiny of the uses of uranium exports. Consideration of all aspects of this issue must be one of the principal subjects for the Commission. The Government has decided not to sell uranium to India because it has not signed or ratified the NPT, but the UNAA regards its stance in the Nuclear Suppliers Group is more debatable.
3. Continuing to sustain the obligations of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

4. Re-engage with the UN through commitment to the international rule of law; changing Australia's votes in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly which meets in October and November each year, in the General Assembly and at the Conference on Disarmament to support resolutions proposing the steps outlined above; actively supporting peaceful conflict resolution and participating in peacekeeping missions. The Senate Committee which tabled a major report on peacekeeping last year recommends preparation of a White Paper on peacekeeping. Since there are many issues to be considered of both principle and resources, this recommendation makes good sense.
5. The Australian Government could become one of the advocates for holding a fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. A note discussing this possibility follows as Attachment 2.

Of course there are innumerable political and technical impediments to movement towards nuclear disarmament. A US president starting the steps towards nuclear disarmament would be opposed not only by hawkish politicians but also by Defense Department doctrinal tradition, and doubtless similar objections would be raised by equivalent officials in Russia and other nuclear countries, as they were in both the US and the Soviet Union when Reagan and Gorbachev spoke about complete nuclear disarmament at Reykjavik.

But America is a democracy. The Defense Dept is not completely unaccountable. A recent US poll found that three quarters of respondents support the verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons. The strategic as well as the humanitarian and political case for nuclear disarmament justifies starting a determined attempt. It is vital for the survival of the world – for global peace and justice – that Australia advocates the start of this process to the Obama Administration.

¹ This and following information are from the *SIPRI Yearbook 2008 Armaments, Disarmament and International*

² Judith Wright, *Collected Poems 1942 – 1985*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1994, p 281

³ Quoted in J Peter Scoblic, 'Disarmament redux', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 2008, p 38

⁴ J Peter Scoblic, 'Disarmament redux', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 2008, p 39

Attachment 1

Summary of

George Perkovich and James M Acton, *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*, Adelphi Paper 396, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, August 2008

George Perkovich is a vice president for studies at the Carnegie endowment for International Peace and director of its non-proliferation program. He is the author of several important books and many articles. James M. Acton is a physicist, was a lecturer in the Dept of War Studies at King's College London until August 2008 and had previously been a technology researcher at the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre.

Introduction

'The paper aims to encourage a conversation about the abolition of nuclear weapons (NW)'. There is a growing belief that nuclear proliferation cannot be stopped without progress towards nuclear disarmament (ND). Without the disarmament action promised by nuclear weapons states (NWS) as their commitment to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) are increasingly reluctant to abide by restraints on their access to nuclear technology. The current nuclear order is inequitable and therefore unsustainable: a new nuclear order must be made equitable by removing the disparity between NWS and NNWS. Yet neither NWS nor NNWS have been engaged in the issues. Fear of proliferation is motivating interest in ND in some NWS but so far NNWS have been disinclined to participate yet their engagement in such discussions is vital. To make abolition feasible all states that possess nuclear reactors, enrichment plants, plutonium reprocessing facilities, uranium reserves or transshipment ports would have to agree with and implement intrusive control measures.

Movement towards ND could only proceed in an *ad hoc* incremental manner, and apart from the deadlocked Conference on Disarmament there is no forum on nuclear affairs which includes all the NWS. The paper sets out to discuss how ND could be achieved safely and securely. The writers believe that NWS have political and moral obligations to seek to eliminate all NW. Their aims are to explore challenges to abolition of NW and what states can do to meet them.

NW cannot be disinvited but can be prohibited and dismantled because they are too dangerous and morally objectionable to persist, as have other artefacts such as gas chambers and CFCs. The principal issue is whether means could be designed to verify dismantling all NW and to detect any attempt at cheating. The challenges of reaching zero should not discourage movement towards that goal.

'The only way to resolve the 'who goes first?' problem among NW and NNWS is to move on both the disarmament and non-proliferation fronts simultaneously'. p13

Ch1 Establishing political conditions to enhance the feasibility of abolishing NW

At present there is a loss aversion amongst NWS: they fear the consequence so losing the deterrence of NW. This underestimates the benefit of living without the threat of nuclear destruction. The most realistic expectation of NWS is that they move incrementally, in reciprocating steps, towards ND. The goal would be to create conditions which ensured the mutual, verifiable and enforceable elimination of all NW. The role required of current leaders is therefore to identify practical, concrete steps to start this process. The paper explores steps which could realistically be taken alone, some which would require joint action by small groups of

states and others which require multilateral agreement. Such a 'co-evolutionary' process would require both weapons-related changes and evolution of the political and strategic environment. Changes would be required of NNWS as well as of NWS. NWS are discussed in turn.

Both the US and Russia have over 5000 operational nuclear warheads, thousands of which could be launched within minutes. Both countries refuse to promise no-first-use so each has the capacity for swift pre-emptive nuclear attack and therefore both risk exacerbating instability in crises and through mistaken use. Yet both countries insist they do not foresee threats from the other. The steps to reduce danger are obvious, have been advocated by the four horsemen opposing an apocalypse but have not yet been adopted. Without a start in their adoption ND is impossible.

France has ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), closed and dismantled facilities for production of fissile material, and reduced the number of its NW, but retains 'fewer than 300 nuclear warheads'. It does not advocate or take action to support ND. The UK too is reducing the number of NW but retains 'no more than 160', has ratified the CTBT, but declines to promise no-first-use. It is upgrading its Trident submarines but is an advocate of ND.

'China has exhibited exceptional restraint in the development of its NW and the political-military prominence it gives to them'. p21 It has a stockpile of fewer than 200 nuclear warheads. It promises no-first-use. Though favouring ND Chinese officials have 'grave doubts' that the US and Russia would pursue this in ways which would alleviate their country's insecurities. India has around 50 – 60 nuclear warheads and continues to expand its weapons-production capacity. Its leaders support ND, promise no-first-use and keep nuclear warheads and delivery systems separated. Pakistan has about 60 warheads, and explicitly allows the possibility of using them first in conflict. Its reaction to any ND proposal would depend on that of India.

Israel keeps its NW hidden and suppresses information about them. It has signed the CTBT and has said that it would sign a NWFZ treaty in the Middle East if other states met its conditions for recognition and disarmament.

One of the first hurdles to a nuclear arms reduction process would be persuading countries such as Russia and China that the threat of US interventions would not increase if NW were abolished. The US would have to declare and demonstrate adherence to international law in relation to the use of force. The US would have 'to eschew unilateral or small-scale military intervention for these purposes'. p25 Arms control and other confidence-building measures would have to be implemented in areas abutting Russia and China and in South Asia. Russia, China and other states would probably seek limits to US conventional weaponry. Given the revolutionary increase in the sophistication of US non-nuclear weapons there is no precedent for the complexity of arms control negotiations relating to them.

If testing shows ballistic missile defences to be effective, this could increase the feasibility of ND by reducing the risk of cheating or use of low numbers of NW. However if such technology is not available to all NNWS it might strengthen the inclination of a state with missile defence to use NW.

Resolution or at least stabilisation of conflicts relating to Taiwan, Kashmir, Palestine and the Russian periphery would be essential before a nuclear disarmament treaty (NDT) could be envisaged. Each of these conflicts is regarded by participants as internal, so their settlement can only be achieved by the states involved. [For details see pp 27 – 30]

Some analysts in NNWS under the nuclear umbrella of NWS have expressed concern about the continuing effectiveness of deterrence. For example, it has been suggested that Japan might abandon its restraint and start NW production. The principal concern seems to be about the last stage of a disarmament process, but these concerns seem exaggerated since disarmament would only be occurring if all states were implementing an agreement.

Starting a rigorous process of ND would reduce the risk of nuclear terrorism.

States are often urged to increase transparency about their NW and components. However secrecy may enable a state such as China to maintain lower numbers of NW than might be regarded as justified if numbers, strength, location etc were known. Similarly publicity about Israel's NW could well strengthen demand in Arab states for development of their own NW. 'Keeping adversaries guessing is a way of reducing vulnerability to a first strike'. p31 Yet greater transparency could be a vital step in a process of ND, for it could be a precursor to the full disclosure required for workable disarmament.

Another necessary preliminary step is that North Korea must apply the agreed framework for ceasing to develop NW. Verification of its actions could be a useful test of some procedures which would be of more general application amongst the steps towards general ND.

Six years after Iran's clandestine nuclear activities were discovered it is still defying the IAEA. 'If Iran continues to successfully defy the rules, procedures and enforcement authorities of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, there is no reason for anyone to have confidence that rules to guide and secure a nuclear-weapons-free world would be enforced'. p37 Establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East is a necessary condition for global NW abolition. Both Israel's possession of NW and Iran's behaviour make this impossible at present.

ND would be facilitated by making the illicit proliferation of NW a crime. Security Council (SC) Resolution 1540 already obliges states to pass legislation criminalizing transfer of nuclear weapons technology to non-state actors. Making this an international crime would strengthen the law.

Reducing the prominence of NW in national security strategy would indicate a national willingness to take steps towards disarmament, as would taking NW off high alert. 'No national leader should be in the position of feeling they must unleash the destructive power of NW immediately upon warning of attack, or risk losing their state's capacity to retaliate'. p39

A significant impediment to complete ND might occur when only low numbers were left, when NWS might attempt to persuade NNWS that such progress had been made that they should be allowed to retain their much more limited arsenals. The response to this proposed new bargain by NNWS would determine its outcome. Like a number of these suggestions there would be value in official and non-official experts starting to model the problems.

Ch2 Verifying the transition to zero

Verification builds confidence that the terms of an agreement are being applied; acts as a trigger for enforcement; and is therefore a deterrent to violations. Effective verification adds to the political feasibility of ND. Influential opinion leaders in NWS are likely to demand perfect verification as a condition for disarmament, but this is extraordinarily difficult. Many experts would be satisfied with ability to detect militarily significant violations. What constitutes military significance can vary with the circumstances.

Verification is a means to an end, not the end itself, which is compliance. Enforcement mechanisms must exist for compliance to be promoted. Imperfections in verification could be offset by robust enforcement.

The paper discusses the purist view of the objectives of complete nuclear disarmament which are that all NW would be securely eliminated and the capacity of states to produce them erased.

A key challenge would relate to what to do with multipurpose materials and equipment. Would fabrication plants used for moulding weapons casings but also used for other purposes have to be monitored? Should specified delivery vehicles such as ballistic missiles be outlawed? Thirty-two states are believed to possess ballistic missiles: would all of them have to abandon them as part of a NDT?

Checking correctness: verifying what has been declared

i. Verifying dismantling of warheads:

A standard model might include requiring states to submit detailed baseline declarations specifying the location, type and possibly the history of each warhead. Each warhead container would be tagged with a barcode. Inspectors would be entitled to make random checks. Warhead containers would need to be sealed to prevent components being secretly removed. Entry of inspectors to NW deployment and storage sites would be sensitive, but managed access techniques are used to verify START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the US and Russia). Warheads would then be dismantled away from inspectors so the portals and perimeter of sites would have to be securely monitored and sites periodically inspected to ensure no components were being secretly retained. Fissile material would be converted into non-weapons-fuel form and other components destroyed.

ii. Are information barriers the solution to the 'authentication' problem?

To ensure that the nuclear warheads were in the containers, the radioactivity of their contents would be checked. Because the detailed readings would be indicators of design, an information barrier is necessary. This could be achieved through 'attribute verification' which set characteristics of a nuclear weapon and allowed enabled testing whether the contents of a container was within the limits of those characteristics. The difficulty is whether other states would accept the limits set by the possessor state as characteristic of its weapons. However this would not guarantee that no fissile material had been removed from containers. An alternative 'template verification' would involve checking whether the contents of containers had a radioactive spectrum equivalent to a declared template spectrum. Continuing research on these technologies is necessary. NWS would need to assess whether additional information about warhead design could be released without increasing the risk of proliferation.

iii. Dealing with fissile material, delivery systems and infrastructure

Verifying the disposal of fissile material, the dismantling of delivery systems and the shutdown or conversion of infrastructure would be easier because their size makes verification more straightforward and there is already considerable experience with such disposal. Highly enriched uranium (HEU) can be denatured by blending into low-enriched uranium (LEU). Following a 1993 agreement, Russia down-blends 30 tones of HEU a year for sale to the US. Excess plutonium can be immobilised by burying it with intensely radio-active nuclear waste or by burning it in civilian nuclear power reactors as mixed oxide (MOX), but these technologies are as yet untried because construction of the facilities are severely delayed.

iv. Next step: generating proof of concept

No state has yet verified the end-to-end process of dismantling and decommissioning one nuclear warhead. The US and Russia could testing a prototype verification scheme.

Assessing completeness: worrying about what is not declared

Clandestine retention of warheads and secret stocks of fissile material would be quite possible. For a disarmament treaty to work NWS would need to be convinced that the benefits of cooperation outweighed the risks of incomplete compliance and so the failure of the scheme

through risks of detection. A number of overlapping techniques could contribute to increasing the risk of detection.

i. Accounting for past production and current holdings of fissile materials

Attempting to account for past production could facilitate growth of confidence that states had not clandestinely retained fissile material and provide a baseline for ensuring that fissile material was not diverted in the future, and in detecting theft. States would be required to submit comprehensive declarations of current stocks and past fissile production and use. Compilation of such comprehensive lists would be difficult and might prove impossible because of its extensiveness and paucity of records and proof of accuracy would also be difficult. Cross-checking could increase confidence in the accuracy of records. Traditional forensic techniques relating to e.g. the age of paper could be useful, but computer records would be easy to change. Nuclear archaeology by assessing isotope residues in graphite during reactor use could be valuable but forensic techniques are much less accurate in relation to heavy-water reactors and enrichment plants, and some plants have been closed. Small measurement errors could also have major implications: a nuclear device requires only 25 kg of HEO or 8kg of plutonium yet both the US and Russia have produced hundreds of tonnes of HEU requiring an impossible measurement accuracy of 0.01 per cent to ensure that all production was reported. As well much of the material produced would already have been used in nuclear detonations or transformed by radioactivity decay; and there are other difficulties. So substantial uncertainties about fissile material stocks are unavoidable even where there are blameless intentions and honest accounting.

ii. Challenge inspections could discourage clandestine attempts to retain warheads or fissile material.

No state has yet ever voluntarily permitted inspections anywhere at any time. The most intrusive system of challenge inspections so far designed is under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). However the host state is still permitted to manage access and constraints are permitted. There has never been a CWC challenge inspection. The IAEA has the right to make special inspections but has requested to do so only once, of North Korea, this was refused and it has not attempted any again. Whether a protocol for challenge inspections could be designed deserves study.

iii. What role for intelligence?

Human and signals intelligence activities could greatly enhance the reliability verification; the issues are whether international agencies should seek or use information provided by national intelligence agencies and whether national agencies would in any case be willing to supply it. The IAEA is permitted to receive intelligence and the US has provided it with satellite imagery relating to North Korea. Nevertheless intelligence is not a key source of information for the agency and national agencies are often unwilling to provide it. This involves a lost opportunity not only to build up information but also to compare sources. Greater trust will be required that intelligence would be kept confidential before more is likely to be forthcoming.

Transparency as a sign of good faith

The central problem of verification is proving a negative, of verifying the absence of nuclear weapons and components. 'The issue is whether the absence of evidence really does constitute evidence of absence'. p61 South Africa, which did manage to prove this negative when it dismantled its nuclear program, principally through its open and transparent behaviour. The benefit of transparency is that it demonstrates good faith. The value of transparency would be increased by a formalized process of making information available and allowing personnel to be interviewed by inspectors for this would ease the culture of secrecy. These measures would also have to be applied to states which had considered making nuclear weapons such as Argentina,

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Romania and Sweden. Information gathered in this way might be controversial and therefore action based on it might be opposed, so agreed procedures might be necessary.

Civil-society monitoring

Societal verification would be a valuable supplement to transparency measures. Responsibility for detecting treaty violation could be shared by society and the effectiveness of this could be enhanced by laws making it the right and in fact the duty of citizens to report evidence of treaty violation to an international body.

Costs

The costs of verification could be considerable. The bill for the International Monitoring System for the CTBT is likely to be of the order of US\$1 billion. The estimated annual verification costs of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty are 50 to 150 million euros. However abolition of NW would lead to great savings. The US spent more than US\$50 billion on NW-related activities in 2006. Costs could be paid by states in the same proportion as their dues to the UN.

Ch3 Managing the nuclear industry in a world without NW

Expansion of nuclear energy generating capacity is being widely proposed and this risks increasing NW proliferation unless new rules for keeping nuclear material and facilities reliably enforced. Yet NNWS are very reluctant to accept such rules unless NWS fulfill the requirement of the NPT to take steps towards disarmament; and NWS are reluctant to disarm while the risk of proliferation is high. This circular problem is enhanced by the additional inequality between those states that possess enrichment or reprocessing facilities and those that do not. Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Iran and South Africa are amongst states which have expressed interest in or begun developing enrichment programs, and these could be used for fuel production for weapons.

Suppliers and buyers of uranium and processed nuclear fuel have been talking past each other: there has been no direct bargaining about interests and possible trade-offs. The global shortage of components for processing facilities may exacerbate tensions. The difficulty of establishing working centrifuges has delayed proliferation but these will be overcome. The possibility of achieving commercial laser enrichment would add to concern. Consideration of options for strengthening control of the nuclear industry is therefore vital.

The hardest task is detecting undeclared nuclear facilities such as small gas-centrifuge plants. Incremental improvements in IAEA safeguards could be made. For example, all yellowcake and other nuclear materials such as neptunium-237 could be placed under safeguards. The frequency of IAEA inspections could be increased.

The safeguards regime could be redesigned to detect much smaller diversions of nuclear material. An effective system of safeguards would: have a high probability of detecting a violation; and give timely warning and convincing evidence of a violation. At present the major delay is in achieving SC agreement on enforcement action rather than in identification of violations. SC decision-making would be likely to be swifter in the context of movement towards NW abolition.

The acceptability of evidence of violation is likely to be increased if there were closer cooperation between the IAEA and national intelligence agencies, for, apart from the original Manhattan project all attempts to build and operate secret fuel-cycle facilities have aroused strong suspicions. Key states have always detected clandestine fissile material production before weapons were produced.

The mandate of the IAEA should be expanded to looking for evidence of weaponisation.

An additional step would be to multinationalise or even internationalise nuclear facilities. This could be a key step towards disarmament, though specifying and implementing the procedures be hugely complicated. Two multinational enrichment organisations already exist, the private Urenco consortium and Eurodif. Ownership would not guarantee control. Equity would suggest that multinational fuel-cycle facilities should be hosted in a number of states.

A major question is whether nuclear activities can be made compatible with ND. Linking plutonium production more closely to demand would reduce unnecessarily large stockpiles. In the medium term there is unlikely to be any shortage of uranium but in the long-run uranium could be depleted if there is rapid growth of demand, which would raise additional issues.

It should be technically possible to eliminate HEU from all types of reactors. For example, it appears that most research reactors now using HEU could be converted to LEU. Converting naval reactors to run on LEU is possible though this has the drawback that 'lifetime cores' which don't have to be replaced would have to be abandoned and reactors using LEU are bigger and noisier than those fuelled by HEU. A more major step would be to ban naval reactors. Seven states have or are in the process of building nuclear submarines and others have expressed interest including Australia. Would they be prepared to abandon them? If not they should prepare options for safeguarding their naval reactors.

Ch4 Enforcement

Enforcement involves developing punishments sufficient to deter states from breaching their obligations by denying them benefits of violation; and that have such legitimacy, robustness and timeliness as to strongly discourage or remove threats.

An enforcement system would be likely to be contentious because of the wide range and ambiguity of potential situations with which it had to contend and the spectrum of concerns about break-out of different countries. Tiny Israel is at one end of the spectrum because so few nuclear weapons could obliterate it. So Israel could not give up its nuclear weapons until potential threats from its neighbours had disappeared, effective enforcement mechanisms were available and sufficient warning would be available of a potential breakout to enable it to win a breakout race. Threats of breakout to the large and militarily strong US would have different implications could be met by overwhelmingly powerful conventional forces, but that would not deter a breakout race if such were threatened. 'Before giving up their last nuclear weapons, states would want to feel confident that the risk of even a 'small' break-out was lower than the risk of keeping a small number of NW and suffering a failure of nuclear deterrence'. p87

Indeed, past experience suggests that NW 'work' only to deter or defeat military aggression against their possessor, not as a shield behind which to successfully take and hold territory. p87

The clearer and stronger the enforcement regime the less ambiguity about non-compliance there would be and therefore the less opportunity for dispute about enforcement to delay action.

There is no serious alternative to the SC as the body mandated to enforce prohibition of NW since the P5 have the power they need to control the process through having a veto. But would a NWS other than a P5 state be willing to eliminate their weapons, knowing that if they were threatened a P5 friend of the country making the threat might be protected from enforcement. Relationships between the US, Russia and China are vital. China and Russia are normally more reluctant than the US to impose sanctions. Domestic political circumstances often intrude on international positioning in ways which reduce national consistency. Progress towards ND is highly unlikely in the absence of reductions in disagreements between these three about regional and global security. 'A first order task, then, is for Beijing, Moscow and Washington to

begin discussions of the conditions they think are necessary to establish to begin genuine transition to a NW-free world'. p90

Such convergence may seem daunting but is relatively straightforward when compared with wining Indian, Pakistani and Israeli endorsement of ND. India publicly supports ND but feels unjustly excluded from the SC. Mandating the SC with enforcement would strengthen India's motivation for demanding a seat with a veto. Yet such a reform is highly unlikely, not least because of opposition from several of the existing P5 and from Pakistan and its allies. Israel would not participate in ND unless the SC demonstrated conclusively its willingness to enforce resolutions affecting Israeli security. The complications relating to SC membership and veto could be avoided by establishing an alternative body for enforcement but this would increase the complexity of dealing with conflicts which involved both nuclear and non-nuclear issues. Where would jurisdiction lie?

A possible solution would be to make enforcement automatic through compulsory imposition of sanctions for example. Debate on such automaticity would be so highly controversial that the proposal would be unlikely to be agreed. The more powerful states would want to retain discretion about how to act against non-compliance. Study of these issues, as of others already mentioned, by officials and non-government experts would be valuable.

Most contemporary analysts agree that enforcement procedures for dealing with non-compliance should be essentially the same as with existing treaties, only surer. The sequence would move from demand for clarification and an end to non-compliance, through suspension of cooperation, economic sanctions, possible expulsion from international institutions to, potentially military action or even removal of a threatening government.

Another issue is whether withdrawal from a NDT would be permitted. All recent arms control agreements contain a withdrawal clause, yet the consequence of withdrawal could be so destructive that the issue is profoundly important. Explicit protections against 'dishonourable withdrawal' would be essential. Specifying such conditions would probably be more acceptable than an outright prohibition on withdrawal.

This framework for negotiation, verification and enforcement of a NDT is very demanding. So many complexities are readily imaginable that some would say the goal is impossible. But most analysts thought the Soviet Union and Cold War were a fixture even in the early eighties. A few leaders of NWS could transform the situation, changing the imperatives with which officials have to work. The leadership of the US, Russia and China are vital. If they set out to reassure each other and to work cooperatively to resolve the regional conflicts in Northeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East they could prevent further proliferation and start step-by-step ND. Whether agreement could be reached and implemented cannot be determined in advance, but the possibility that it might is sufficiently strong to justify trying.

Ch5 Hedging and managing nuclear expertise in the transition to zero and after

Even if ND were implemented the former NWS would retain a greater capacity to reverse renunciation than NNWS. Such hedging might be regarded as an element of an enforcement regime for at least a transitional period. However if one state insisted on hedging others would do so too, so the management of nuclear knowledge deserves considerable attention.

One idea, the retention of an internationally controlled nuclear deterrent, has so many undesirable features that it can be discarded. Another, of keeping 'virtual' nuclear arsenals to facilitate 'weaponless deterrence' and quick building of NW, might help to deter break-out. Such capacity might also have a transitional role during the last stage of disarmament and the early post disarmament period by reassuring the insecure about capacity. Nevertheless the idea is controversial. There is a feasibility question: how long would such capacity last? Virtual arsenals might also foster instability, for states might use them too readily. Such an arrangement also

sustains inequity between former NWS and NNWS. They could though be seen as one of the temporary transitional arrangements. Such issues can only be settled by negotiation.

Some inequity would inevitably persist just because of the retention of knowledge and the impossibility of ensuring destruction of written knowledge. 'Tacit' knowledge, held by professional and technical experts formerly involved in production processes would however fade as their generation retired and died.

Conclusions

Reactions to these proposals might include 'Why bother?' and 'Abolition is more trouble than it is worth'. 'Such proposals are impractical because the NWS will always find reasons for opposing them'. Clearly a ND process would face great difficulty and complexity, but the reasons for attempting the task are enormously strong.

1. The NPT requires the NWS to eliminate their arsenals, and if the rule-based international system is taken seriously attempts to fulfill this requirement are essential.
2. Expansion of nuclear energy will threaten security if it is not matched with universal and tougher verification and inspection protocols.
3. ND would steadily reduce risks of nuclear terrorism.
4. Failure of NWS to disarm tempts more NNWS to seek their own NW.
5. 'The ultimate reason for trying to eliminate nuclear arsenals is to reduce the danger of sudden mass annihilation that NW are uniquely capable of producing'.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference is a vital opportunity for starting to renovate the global nuclear order.

Summary prepared by Professor John Langmore

Note on the Possibility and Potential Value of Holding a Fourth Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament

This note evaluates the possibility which was mentioned at the first meeting of the Commission that a fourth special session of the UN General Assembly (GA) on disarmament (SSOD IV) could contribute to the Commission's work. It begins with a summary of the state of the debate at the UN about holding SSOD IV.

The three special sessions of the GA on disarmament (SSOD) which were held in 1978, 1982 and 1988 are described and their outcomes summarised in Annex 1. The GA decided in December 1995 to convene a fourth SSOD but there was no agreement then nor has there been in later years so far about the objectives, agenda or timing. The 61st session of the GA decided at the end of 2006 to establish an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of a preparatory committee.

Ambassador Alfredo Labbé of Chile was elected to chair the Working Group with Vice-Chairs Katarzyna Bierat of Poland, Carl Magnus Nesser from Sweden and Febrian Ruddyard from Indonesia and initially Lotfi Bouchaara from Morocco as Rapporteur and later Sulay-Manah Kpukumu from Sierra Leone. The Group held 15 meetings and considered various papers but did not reach a consensus on the objectives or agenda for a SS and in August 2007 referred the issue back to the GA for further consideration.

The Chair of the Working Group wrote during the discussions of the acute divergences amongst Member States about the need and political feasibility of a fourth SSOD. However, early in the 62nd session of the GA, Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) sponsored a motion at the First Committee (which addresses Disarmament and International Security issues) on convening the fourth special session of the GA devoted to disarmament. This was passed there and again in the GA and since it is the most recent substantive resolution on the issue it is attached at Annex 2. The resolution urged the OEWG to reconvene, to hold its organisational session as soon as possible and to submit its report by the end of the 62nd session of the GA. All 180 Member States other than the US which voted supported the resolution. The 'acute divergences' did not prevent agreement amongst all but one of the Member States.

Since US opposition prevented the consensus which is necessary for an OEWG to reach a conclusion, the Group did not reconvene in 2008. At the end of the 62nd session on 2 September 2008 Indonesia, on behalf of the NAM, sponsored a draft decision to the GA noting that since the Open-ended Working Group had not reconvened, the Assembly decides 'to continue work on convening those sessions of the Working Group as soon as possible'. This was adopted as Decision 62/552 on 11 September.

Throughout the meetings of the First Committee of the GA in the 63rd session in October 2008 many delegations, including the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Rio Group, called for the establishment of SSOD IV. The First Committee and the General Assembly adopted, without debate or a vote, a draft decision A/C.1/63/L.22 proposed by Indonesia on behalf of the NAM to include again in the provisional agenda of its 64th session the item entitled 'Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament'. No doubt members thought that the impending inauguration of the new US Administration might lead to a change in the position of the US. Therefore further work by the Open-ended Working Group and discussion in the GA are authorised. A meeting of the Working Group is scheduled for January 2009.

Benefits and Risks of a SSOD IV

A fourth SSOD could be of value to the Commission in a number of ways. The General Assembly is the principal inclusive global political forum. It has uniquely comprehensive membership and is empowered with political legitimacy and legal authority. The GA is able to give collective legitimisation and moral authority to its decisions.

A special session would be a means of ensuring greater prominence for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament on the international agenda. It would be a potentially highly visible global forum and would therefore make a significant contribution to public education about the dangers of nuclear weapons, the risks of their use and means of preventing proliferation and moving towards disarmament.

The context of a GA SSOD IV would be a conducive setting for such a conference. For example, GA Resolution 62/29 notes 'the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament under effective international control'; and the Millennium Declaration approved in the GA by Heads of State and Government resolved 'to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons'. The Millennium Declaration, by the way, also mentioned 'the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers'. Resolution 62/29 reiterates the conviction of Member States 'that a special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament can set the future course of action in the fields of disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation and related international security matters'.

Depending on timing, a SSOD IV could have one of two roles: either it could provide an opportunity for Member States to make official comments on issues being addressed by the Commission; or, once the Commission has completed its reports, in ensuring that there is a forum with the authority to attract widespread attendance and official responses which could make politically influential decisions about implementation. A special conference could be organised for this purpose in some other forum to offer briefing and an opportunity for discussion, but a special session of the GA would be a more obvious and potentially influential forum. To ensure that the Commission's analysis and recommendations are taken seriously it will be essential to encourage both nuclear and non-nuclear states to discuss them together as well as individually and a SSOD would seem to be uniquely suited for such a task. A SSOD offers the opportunity for strengthening political will and commitment to implementation of proposed actions.

National pressure is likely to ensure that the agenda would be broad. The NAM's submission to the Working Group in 2007 articulated both wide objectives for the conference and an extensive agenda. Proposed agenda items included: implementation of the Final Document for SSOD I; nuclear weapons including nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, nuclear-weapons-free-zones, the CTBT and FMCT; chemical and biological weapons; missiles; arms in outer space; several issues relating to conventional weapons; regional security; disarmament machinery; and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The SSOD could help in revitalising disarmament machinery by, for example, addressing the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. Such an agenda could be so broad that it constrained sufficiently detailed attention to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, but it would also involve opportunities for addressing such interdependent issues as nuclear and technically advanced conventional weapons, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy and regional political conflicts and nuclear weapons.

The course of a major global conference cannot be precisely predicted. Conflicts can be exacerbated in ways which add to impediments. Networks may be strengthened which entrench divisions or disagreements, or alliances might form against particular recommendations. However it would seem excessively cautious to reject the opportunities which a SSOD creates on the grounds of such risks.

The Chair of the Working Group noted in a paper he wrote for the Group that to command comparable political authority to the first SSOD in 1978 'the final document of a fourth special session should be a coalescing vehicle for all United Nations Member States. As such, it must enjoy significant consensus (including all key players) and add value over and above what was accomplished by the first special session'.

If the inauguration of the Obama Administration leads to the removal of the US veto of a SS in the OEWG and the Group then made rapid progress in agreeing on objectives, agenda and proposals for establishment of a preparatory committee the process of organising the conference could take up to two or three years. One professional estimate I heard when talking with Secretariat officers in New York was that, even with agreement about intent and approach, it might take until 2012 to organise. No doubt with determination this could be reduced to 2011 but even that is likely to be after the completion of the Commission's second report.

The calling of a SSOD is not within the powers of the Commission: the initiative is held by member governments. However the Commission could support and advocate the holding of a SSOD as one forum for debate and decision about its recommendations. The potential benefits of such an opportunity seem likely to far outweigh the risks. Reports of previous commissions like the ICNNDP have frequently suffered from neglect, and while the times are far more propitious now, such an opportunity for promoting global discussion could be of value. A SSOD IV which focussed at least in part on the Commission's report could make a major contribution to ensuring that the conclusions and recommendations are taken seriously, and strengthen momentum and will for their implementation.