

Getting to Zero, my reflections on the first day of the Summit

Programme leader Susi Snyder went to the Global Zero Summit in Paris in February 2010. She gives her impression of the summit.

It was an interesting start to the Global Zero Summit. I breakfasted with two former Presidents- Ernesto Zedillo (Mexico) and Mary Robinson (Ireland). It was an opportunity to talk more about the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament (ICNND) report and to talk a bit about the way that the Global Zero Action Plan and their recommendations support one another. I also had the pleasure to learn about the efforts of Ms. Robinson in setting up a new organization in Ireland that will look at Climate Security issues. Something to keep on the radar.

Global Zero Action Plan

The first session of the Summit involved the presentation of the Global Zero Action Plan (GZAP). I was astonished to see that the Global Zero commissioners were all men. Each and every one of them. It was explained by Ambassador Richard Burt that each of the commissioners had at one time been directly engaged in nuclear weapons strategy or command and control from their countries. That has historically been the business of men throughout the world, and there are few, few women who have been directly engaged in the issues of nuclear armament, more women seem to demonstrate leadership in disarmament.

First phase: down to 1000

The GZAP was presented as a four phased system. The first phase focuses specifically on US and Russian deep reductions. There are assumptions made that the START follow-on agreement will be concluded early and ratified quickly in both US and Russian Parliaments. The Chairman of the Russian Committee for Foreign Affairs, Mikhail Margelov, commented that it is necessary that both Russia and the US ratify the START follow-on agreement simultaneously, that this is a necessity to ensure broad support in both bodies. The second part of this first phase is the preparation for multilateral discussions, while a secondary agreement between the US and Russia to go to a total of 1,000 warheads (not differentiating between tactical and strategic weapons) is negotiated. The GZAP hopes that this second agreement is fully implemented by 2018. There was no mention about the reduction of the reliance on nuclear weapons in national or regional security strategies.

Second phase: down to 500 and verification process

The second phase of the GZAP calls for the US and Russia to negotiate to a total of 500 warheads each, while other nuclear weapons states (defined as all states who have nuclear weapons- not only the recognized ones under the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty) maintain a freeze on their stockpiles. This would then be followed by proportionate reductions until 2021. During this time a comprehensive verification and enforcement system, and strengthened safeguards on civilian nuclear fuel would need to be developed.

I was able to participate in a smaller session on the issue of verification later in the day. Looking at examples from the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation, the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons, United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), this discussion started to examine both technical and political challenges towards verification. The idea of a single bomb standard for verification was raised as a conceptual shift in thinking about this. The Norway/ UK/ Vertic study on verifying disarmament was mentioned briefly by Dr. Hans Blix, but did not get much further discussion. The need for any verification regime to have access to personnel as well as materials and facilities was stressed, as was the importance of tracking and tracing the money needed to build the weapons and access to account information to do so.

Third phase: down to zero

The third part of the GZAP looks to negotiate a legally binding international agreement to zero. The plan calls for this to be ratified by all nuclear capable states before entry- into- force, the way that the CTBT is set up. This is designed as a confidence building measure, yet there is understanding in the plan that not all nuclear capable states must participate in the negotiations themselves, they have the choice of whether to be there, or to participate in some parts and not others. This effectively eliminates the Conference on Disarmament (at least under its current rules of procedure) as the negotiating forum. The final phase of the GZAP is to implement the treaty and get to global zero.

Assumptions

The plan assumes that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty will enter into force, and soon. It also assumes that a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear explosive devices will have entered into force in the near future. The discussion of the plan raised questions about the balance between conventional and nuclear forces. There was also some discussion, occasionally heated, about the need for the political challenges in South East Asia, North East Asia and the Middle East to also be considered as these plans move forward. The plan also puts a timeline for these things to happen- with a target date for zero set at 2030. That too raised questions- will working without time pressure make this issue more palatable for negotiators? Will putting a deadline on discussions undermine credibility? If we focus too much on the end- game, will we lose sight of today?

Parallel

Some steps that could occur in parallel were put forward in the discussion by Dr. Vladimir Orlov, who suggested that a decision to not increase the numbers of nuclear weapons, taken by the UN Security Council with complimentary unilateral statements by the other nuclear armed states could comprise a first step. This should be followed by nuclear armed states with weapons deployed outside of their national territories recalling those weapons (upholding the spirit of the NPT); a reduction of reliance on nuclear weapons in national security doctrines and finally the consideration of keeping space for peace, reforming European security architecture and consideration of the Middle East as components that should also be included in thinking about getting to zero.

Michael Douglas

The only mention of the dangers of nuclear power was made by Michael Douglas. He reflected on how he got engaged in the issue in the first place and described making the film *China Syndrome*- blasted by critics as unrealistic and doom-saying on its opening weekend, followed not a week later by the nuclear meltdown at Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania in 1979. He also spoke of his visit to Belarus, to see where his father came from, only to find that it was no longer there. The Chernobyl disaster had made the place uninhabitable, and it was just gone.

Film "Countdown to Zero"

An exclusive screening of the film "Countdown to Zero" was arranged, with a short presentation by Producer Lawrence Bender. The film took an honest and stark assessment of the three major threats the world faces from nuclear weapons, as noted by President Kennedy at the UN- accident, mistake, or madness. It highlighted how easy it would be for a catastrophic nuclear accident to take place and decimate a city, how many, many mistakes have already brought the world close to nuclear annihilation, and the ease with which a group of about 20-25 people could put together a simple nuclear weapon. The film recognized the difficulty in obtaining the fissile materials needed to make the bomb go boom, but also reminded the audience that not only is there no global accounting of these materials to date, but that unknown quantities have already gone missing throughout the

nuclear age. It was a stark wake up call for those not versed in the issues, and a powerful reminder to those of us to eat, drink, live and breathe them about how fragile our nuclear security truly is.

Queen Noor and Shultz

Queen Noor said: "We are so close. Closer than ever before to a world without nuclear weapons; closer than ever before to a world devastated by them". Former Secretary of State George Shultz emphasized the need to move with careful urgency, while noting that many of the things needed to do to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons can be done simultaneously. Given current stalemates in the Geneva based Conference on Disarmament, given that the General Assembly First Committee has become little more than a resolution factory, and that the NPT is still viewed as an unbalanced and somewhat exclusive treaty, I have to wonder- where will these necessarily multilateral negotiations be done?

Dhanapala

One of the most impressive statements delivered at this conference is certainly the one presented by Ambassador Dhanapala. His stirring remarks recognized that there is a distinct need for the Global Zero Action Plan (GZAP) to embrace a Nuclear Weapons Convention. This way, the efforts of the participants to translate rhetoric into reality can achieve the goal of outlawing nuclear weapons, the only weapon of mass destruction not banned by international law. Ambassador Dhanapala also reminded those present that while the next few months are filled with opportunities- the Nuclear Security Summit in April, the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May- there are other opportunities to garner support for Global Zero including the Conference on Disarmament and the UN General Assembly.

Norway

While the issue of military spending has come up a number of times no one at this conference has noted the likelihood of a Millennium+10 Summit at the outset of the next General Assembly. I have heard some preliminary discussions about this, and there is a rumor that the Norwegian Government will be holding a preparatory meeting in Oslo to discuss ways to incorporate security issues, including disarmament, into the Summit meant to examine progress on the Millennium Development Goals. The issue of nuclear disarmament is ripe for inclusion, given that the M+10 will take place about one year after the UN Security Council Summit that passed resolution 1887.

Tactical or Theatre Nuclear weapons

The issue of Tactical or Theatre Nuclear weapons (TNWs) stored on European soil was raised by Carl Bildt, Swedish Foreign Minister, who suggested a few options to do this. One idea is to withdraw them from the western side, through the NATO Strategic Concept review, taking place this year, which should seek to reduce and preferably eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in the security strategy; another idea he put forward was to request the Russian Federation to withdraw their weapons to further within their territory. This negotiation could take place bilaterally or between NATO and Russia. Bildt said that as long as there were nuclear weapons stored in NATO countries they would figure into NATO planning, and he suggested that the time is right to change that planning and instead develop alternatives.

The discussion on TNWs, raised by Bildt, was taken up further. Ambassador Pickering described NATO as a "huge nasty hangover" from the "generational hangover of the cold war" and suggested that NATO needs to be understood by Russia not as a cold war device, but rather as a global peacekeeper. Malcolm Rifkind asked if there could be political movement on this issue? Should there be negotiations to eliminate the category of TNWs? Senator Margelov noted that there needs to be more work on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between Russia and the US and that the START follow-on is just a start. Hans Blix raised the issue of a treaty on European Security, possibly

going further than the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, which has been little implemented anyway, this has been further developed by Russia and Rep. Kosachev noted that a draft text is available.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Ellen Taucher discussed the near conclusion of the START follow-on agreement with Russia, announced in the press as 'completed in principle'. She described the process of the US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which President Obama has asked to present him with a variety of options, and noted that the commitment to NATO and the issue of sub-strategic nuclear weapons will be included in this review. When asked about the process for a CTBT ratification, Taucher replied "when we're ready" we'll send it to the Senate. The US National Academy of Sciences has been asked to review the technical and other issues associated with CTBT ratification. She mentioned the increase in budget allocation to the US nuclear weapons labs in order to maintain credible deterrence, an increase designed for infrastructure and personnel and the 'refurbishment' but not 'modernization' of nuclear weapons through 'science - based management' (or maintenance without full - scale nuclear testing, a popular euphemism from the Clinton era). When asked if there was any consideration to negotiating a fissile materials (cut off) treaty outside of the Pakistan - blocked Conference on Disarmament, she replied that while the US is listening closely to Pakistan's serious security concerns and prefers to negotiate in the CD the US doesn't want to permanently miss this opportunity to go forward. It was clear by her remarks that the ratification of the START follow-on is the first priority, and CTBT may not come for a while yet- one audience member muttered that 'we won't see it before the second term'.