



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Geneva, 25 June 2008
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**Address by
Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy,
to the Conference on Disarmament**

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Madam President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to you this morning about an issue that is of great importance. Disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are enormous challenges for the international community. The key question is: will the UN disarmament and arms control architecture live up to our hopes and expectations?

This Conference on Disarmament is a key part of the architecture. It has a long and distinguished history. We should not forget that it was here, in Geneva, that crucial treaties were negotiated. Among them, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Conventions and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. These achievements should act as a source of inspiration.

But, if truth be told, the last ten years have been a "lost decade". When UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke to you at the opening of the 2008 session, he made clear that he was deeply troubled by the lack of progress. I fully share his view. It is puzzling that during an entire decade and despite enormous efforts, there is still no agreement even on the question of how to address the issues and in which order.

My core message to you today is that it is time to start working. The world cannot afford this on-going stalemate. The EU, for its part, will do whatever it can to revitalise this Conference on Disarmament. Of course, multilateral arms control treaties can also be negotiated outside the established international framework. Sometimes with great success. Take the treaty banning antipersonnel mines. But these efforts are no substitute for the necessary strengthening of comprehensive international agreements on weapons of mass destruction and other arms. That is your responsibility.

Everyone knows that the Conference on Disarmament is the only place to forge a credible plan shared by Nuclear Weapon States and Non-Nuclear Weapon States alike. Everyone also knows that thinking on nuclear disarmament has evolved a lot recently. For instance, in the US, Henry Kissinger, together with George Schultz, William Perry, and Sam Nunn have called for practical measures to reach the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

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The two candidates in the United States Presidential elections have stated their openness to new thinking on nuclear issues, both in terms of numbers of warheads and posture. In Europe, Prime Minister Brown and President Sarkozy, amongst others, have called for the immediate start of negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. This brings me back to this forum.

A work plan is on your table. It would allow you to start negotiations, without preconditions, on a multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. For the European Union, launching these negotiations is urgent and important.

But of course the work plan also allow you to engage in substantive discussions - not just an exchange of views - on three other issues, which are of no less importance: nuclear disarmament per se; the prevention of an arms race in outer space; and negative security assurances.

It would also allow the Conference on Disarmament to continue working on all other issues on the agenda. The proposed work programme has been discussed for years. It is a compromise, with concessions from all sides.

As Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said: "It would not deprive any Member State of the ability to assert its national position in the subsequent phases of work". We in the European Union fully believe that this plan gives us a realistic basis to get the Conference on Disarmament back to negotiations. We have carefully listened to the difficulties that a few countries have with the proposal and we remain open to discuss any specific security concerns. But we have found no argument that would justify a prolonged hibernation in the Conference on Disarmament.

What we need now is to get started, both with the negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and the other parts of the work plan. I am here today to call personally on all countries to join the emerging consensus.

Allow me to address a few other issues high on the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda.

I would like to underline that the European Union is ready to work on all three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear energy. As many of you know, I have spoken publicly about the need to make progress with multilateral fuel cycle arrangements.

For the overall system, the NPT Review Conference in 2010 presents us with a unique opportunity. We are determined to ensure a success. But the NPT can only fulfil its role if we are confident about the compliance by all states with their obligations under the treaty.

As this Conference knows, serious proliferation cases have arisen in recent years. The European Union has been actively engaged, with others, to ensure full compliance with the NPT, in full co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna. Of course, when we talk about strengthening the non-proliferation/disarmament system, we also need to look at other instruments.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is fundamental. As I said earlier on, its negotiation was one of the Conference on Disarmament's great successes. But we need to create a new momentum so that it enters into force. The EU calls on all states, particularly those needed for its entry into force, to sign and ratify the treaty without delay.

This conference also deals with the prevention of an arms race in outer space. You have heard Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov present the Russian viewpoint, and a draft proposal for a treaty. Preventing an arms race in outer space is certainly of great importance. Without doubt, this issue needs to be addressed. However, the time might not be ripe yet politically, to aim for a treaty.

As an intermediate step, the EU is working on an instrument that could take the form of a Code of Conduct which would help build transparency and confidence. It will be presented to you later this year. We look forward to discussing this idea with you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Of course there are many other aspects to non-proliferation and disarmament. But this morning I wanted to focus on the essential which is to end the impasse and get started on the basis of a balanced work plan. This Conference on Disarmament must meet the expectations that people have. It is in our shared interest to make real progress on both our non-proliferation and disarmament objectives.

Thank you very much.
