



**COUNCIL OF
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**Keynote speech by
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*"European Proposals for strengthening disarmament
and the Non-Proliferation regime"*

at the

**PES Conference on "Peace and Disarmament:
A World without Nuclear Weapons?"**

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Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much

I want to start by thanking the Socialist Group in the European Parliament for organising this conference and for asking me to participate. I am pleased to be here for two reasons. First, I am happy to be among friends. But second, and more important, I think that the topic of this conference is well-chosen.

The question of nuclear disarmament has again moved to the top of the international agenda. This is most welcome. Nuclear disarmament matters. Not only to politicians and diplomats but also to the people. Large nuclear arsenals reflect old and current political tensions. But they also contribute to tensions - and with that, the risk of conflict.

Moreover, the more nuclear weapons there are, the greater the chances of their use. Or mis-use should they fall into the wrong hands.

Therefore: a world with fewer nuclear weapons is a safer world - for everybody. If you forgive me the phrase: a world without nuclear weapons is a world worth looking for.

This why I am fully behind the recent initiative of President Sarkozy, which built on earlier work involving the UK and others of the European Union.

Sarkozy has written a letter, on behalf of the EU, to the UN Secretary General with a list of concrete EU priorities and proposals.

This is, to my mind, a major European contribution to push forward the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

I am also pleased that, in the US, fresh thinking has emerged. Both on why and how it can inject new momentum into this topic.

As you well know, a few years ago, a bipartisan group, led by former secretaries of state and of defence, called for gradual disarmament steps, with a view to ultimately reaching the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, provided robust verification mechanisms could be arranged.

I am happy to see that President-elect Obama for his part has announced that he will be seeking significant changes in US nuclear policy, with respect to the number of nuclear warheads and overall US posture.

Of course, we need to remember that the Russian Federation is a central player in this too.

I am convinced that through constructive engagement with Russia in this area, there is a lot that can be achieved. The Russian Federation too benefits from a world with fewer nuclear weapons. A more predictable world with strong agreements and greater international confidence.

Before getting into some of the more specific elements of what the EU is doing and could do in this area, I want to state why the political context in which we operate is so important. That context is one where the overall, multilateral non-proliferation regime is under growing pressure.

The core problem is a lack of trust. Lack of trust between the nuclear and the non-nuclear states. Lack of trust between the North and the South.

There is a perception that there is an overall imbalance between the three pillars of the regime. That is non-proliferation, access to technology and disarmament. It is in our common interest to address this trust deficit.

We must rebuild trust and confidence and reinforce multilateralism that has been eroding during the past ten years. I am convinced that we need a new pact of confidence and trust between the developed and the developing world

We need to recognize that international agreements will bring more security. We need new agreements between technology holders and those that are dependent on technology transfers. We need new trust that nuclear-weapon states fulfil their obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament. And we need trust that there is access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, provided countries fully comply with their non-proliferation obligations.

The timeline, in my mind, is clear. That is why we need a balanced and effective outcome at the next NPT Review Conference in 2010. That is why the EU is working hard to make this conference a success, engaging all players in an active dialogue. There are also a few more specific points I would like to raise:

As mentioned by the chairman, just yesterday in the Council, we decided to support the IAEA nuclear fuel bank with a contribution of up to € 25 million for its construction. This will allow the IAEA to finalise the modalities for the bank, so that the IAEA Board can approve it.

The idea of a fuel bank is not new. It has been discussed for many years. I am hopeful that this time we will succeed. We want the bank to be established very soon. In any case before the next NPT Review Conference in spring 2010.

I am convinced that the creation of a fuel bank will have a positive impact on the general climate of the NPT Review Conference. It will facilitate progress on all three pillars of the NPT, namely non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

It is important to note that the fuel bank is not exclusive in its character. There are parallel initiatives and ideas that may prove useful to meet different situations. But the fuel bank would be the first concrete step to make the long-discussed project into a reality.

The EU considers that the development of nuclear energy requires the best possible standards of safety, security and non-proliferation. The multilateral mechanisms should offer a real alternative to countries to forego developing their own national enrichment and reprocessing capabilities – which can constitute a significant risk for nuclear proliferation.

We cannot afford to fail. If we do, we may face new problems. New countries that are tempted to cross the red line and go nuclear. But if we succeed, on the other hand, we will strengthen the multilateral nuclear non-proliferation system which is a core EU objective and strengthen international cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction was adopted in 2003. At the time, we were farsighted. This strategy and its core principles remain valid.

The EU remains committed to the multilateral treaty-based system. To all other relevant disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and international organisations: We want to pursue universalisation of multilateral agreements. We want to reinforce strict implementation of these agreements, and we want to co-cooperate with partners and give assistance to third countries.

Since 2003, the EU has adopted more than 20 Joint Actions to support the work of international organisations in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament. To give you an example, the EU is the biggest donor to the IAEA's Nuclear Security Fund, contributing more than € 20 million as financial support. Our assistance has helped dozens of countries in Africa, the Balkans, Central Asia and South East Asia to prevent nuclear terrorism by strengthening the physical protection, security and control of nuclear and other radioactive materials.

We can be satisfied, to a certain extent, with the implementation of the Strategy. But we can make it even more operational. Yesterday, EU Foreign Ministers endorsed new lines for EU action to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery system. The overriding goal of the plan is to achieve greater coordination within the EU - to maximise the impact of our action:

We will intensify efforts to counter proliferation flows and proliferation financing, we will sanction acts of proliferation, we will develop measures, including cooperation on consular vigilance, to prevent intangible transfers of knowledge and know-how, we will raise awareness in undertakings, scientific and academic circles, and financial institutions. We will continue cooperation with international organisations and third countries to help them improve non-proliferation policies and export controls.

To achieve this ambitious agenda, we have to mainstream non-proliferation in our overall policies. Non-proliferation is not just a security and external matter but is a cross-cutting issue that affects visa-issuing, university cooperation, financial supervision and so on.

In the foreign policy field, non-proliferation concerns are taken into account by including WMD clauses into EU agreements with third countries. Negotiations have been concluded successfully with nearly 100 States in the world. We are now going to assess the implementation of the WMD clause and how to react in case of non-compliance.

It has been 40 years since the signature of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The EU remains committed to the NPT and supports all its three pillars. The NPT is not a perfect system. But it is the only one we have. All in all, it has served us well.

Apart from upholding the NPT, the EU is also launching a big campaign to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Equally, we should stop the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament.

We need to start negotiations, without preconditions, on a multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. I spoke to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva last June. Of course, we also hope that the US and Russia will make progress in their negotiations on a post-START agreement.

Dear friends,

Let me end where I began. The world badly needs more progress on nuclear disarmament. With new thinking in the major countries and also in the countries which can experience the temptation of nuclear armament, progress is possible. The task of political leaders is to set a sense of direction. And to build trust among the key players. That is a task for many people, including in the European Union.

I thank you for your attention.
