

Jayantha Dhanapala, address at IPS Awards Ceremony

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Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

A nuclear weapon free world can and must happen in my lifetime. This may seem a bold and wildly Pollyannaish statement for me make after a lifetime of work in peace and disarmament.

But consider some of the key global threats facing us today -25 years after the Berlin Wall fell symbolizing the end of the Cold War and on the cusp of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations – this centre for harmonizing the actions of 193 nations mandated by the Charter to maintain international peace and security.

- ❖ There is the Fifth Assessment Report of the Inter-governmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) conveys the unambiguous message that climate change is caused by human action and that unchecked it will lead to catastrophe;
- ❖ There is inequality of income as a feature throughout the world, where the poorest 1.2 billion consume just 1% while the richest billion consume 72%, causing increasing frustration and tension especially among the youth who are 26% of the global population;
- ❖ There is religious extremism, racism and the bestial violence of ISIS, Boko Haram and other anarchic groups which challenge our shared values and civilized societal norms;
- ❖ There is the state terrorism of Israel waging unequal war against the Palestinians while occupying their territory and depriving them of their statehood in violation of international law;
- ❖ There are more than 50 million who are currently displaced by war and violence – some 33.3. Million in their own country and approximately 16.7 million as refugees – the highest number since World War II; and
- ❖ There are the problems of hunger, disease, poverty and violations of human rights that continue to disfigure the human condition.

Is the nuclear weapon ever going to be a deterrent to combat these threats let alone be used to solve these problems? Or is it not more likely that in a skewed world of nuclear “haves” and “have-nots” we are going to have increasing proliferation including by terrorist non-state actors? Scientific evidence is proof that even a limited nuclear war – if those confines are possible – will cause irreversible climate change and destruction of human life and its supporting ecology on an unprecedented scale. We the people have a “responsibility to protect” the world from nuclear weapons by

outlawing them through a verifiable Nuclear Weapon Convention overriding all other self-proclaimed “R 2 P” applications.

Despite this overwhelming evidence the world has 16,300 nuclear warheads among nine nuclear weapon armed countries with USA and the Russian Federation accounting for 93% of the weapons. Of this about 4000 warheads are on a deployed operational footing. The spectre of the use of a nuclear weapon through political intent, cyber attack or by accident; by a nation state or by a non-state actor is more real than we, in our cocoons of complacency, choose to acknowledge. At a time of declining resources for development a huge amount of US \$ 1747 billion continues to be spent on arms in general and nuclear weapons modernization. In the US alone, in a glaring contradiction of President Obama’s promises, nuclear weapon modernization will cost \$ 355 billion over the next ten years. A far-sighted military general twice-elected President of the USA, Dwight Eisenhower, warned over 50 years ago about the insidious influence of the “military industrial complex” in his country. That influence driven by an insatiable desire for profit has spread globally stoking the flames of war even as the United Nations and other peacemakers try to find peaceful solutions in terms of the Charter.

I am proud that the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, which I am privileged to lead today, has campaigned assiduously for over five decades seeking the total elimination of nuclear weapons based on the 1955 London Manifesto co-signed by Albert Einstein and Lord Bertrand Russell. Sir Joseph Rotblat, one of Pugwash’s founding fathers who walked out of the Manhattan Project as a conscientious objector, shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Pugwash in 1995. Pugwash is but one of the many citizen movements who have since 1945 urged the abolition of nuclear weapons. It was pressure from civil society that finally led to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and other significant milestones on the road to outlawing nuclear weapons. The world has already accomplished a ban on two other categories of weapons of mass destruction – biological and chemical weapons. I salute the Marshall Islands for taking the nine nuclear weapon states to the International Court of Justice accusing them of violating their legal obligations and look forward to the outcome at next year’s hearings.

Two NGOs -ICAN and PAX - have painstakingly researched the money behind nuclear weapons and have revealed in their “Don't Bank on the Bomb” report that since January 2011, 411 different banks, insurance companies and pension funds have invested US \$402 billion in 28 companies in the nuclear weapon industry. The nuclear-armed nations spend a combined total of more than USD 100 billion on their nuclear forces every year. Let me quote from the report – “The top 10 investors alone provided more than 175 billion US dollars to the 28 identified nuclear weapon producers. With the exception of French BNP Paribas, all financial institutions in the top 10 are based in the US. The top 3 – State Street, Capital Group and Blackrock - have a combined US\$ 80 billion invested. In Europe, the most heavily invested are BNP Paribas (France), Royal Bank of Scotland and Barclays (both United Kingdom). In Asia, the biggest investors are Mitsubishi UFJ Financial and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial (both Japan) and the Life Insurance Corporation of India.”

I appeal to all of you present to make your own practical contribution to nuclear disarmament by joining the divestment campaign. The faded rhetoric of President

Obama's celebrated Prague speech in April 2009 about a nuclear weapon free world has little to show as results unless civil society acts.

The world has scaled many heights in my lifetime.

- Colonialism which enslaved my country for 450 years was dismantled in my lifetime liberating numerous countries including mine;
- the civil rights movement in the USA ended segregation, racial discrimination and other indignities imposed on black Americans;
- I have seen the end of the odious apartheid regime and the peaceful transition to a non-racial democracy in South Africa;
- and, finally, we have witnessed the end of the Cold War with its global tension and rivalry.

These are inspirational achievements of which humankind can be proud. Through all these achievements we remember gratefully the exemplary leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. It was their unswerving dedication to non-violence that ensured victory over evil and injustice.

Nuclear disarmament is likewise an achievable goal and not the mirage that the nuclear weapon states would have us believe. The successful conclusion of a final agreement on the Iran nuclear programme and the forthcoming NPT Review Conference in 2015 are opportunities for us all to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons by eliminating the weapons themselves. I fear that the longer we wait for nuclear weapon states to act the anger of impotence may lead to extremist groups seizing control of nuclear weapons.

We are fortunate to have in Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon a global leader dedicated to the cause of nuclear disarmament and his Five-point Plan remains a lodestar for the global community.

The Inter Press Service (IPS), our hosts this evening, must be congratulated on their 50th anniversary. Serving the cause of the developing world, IPS has held aloft important principles of equity and justice in international relations calling for an end to unequal exchange in all its forms.

I am deeply grateful for the award conferred on me today. I have long believed in the dictum of Jean Monnet - the European Union's architect and visionary - that "*Nothing is possible without men, but nothing lasts without institutions.*" Thus this award honours the organizations with which I have been associated in a long struggle to rid the world of the most inhumane and destructive weapon ever invented. I take this opportunity to rededicate myself to this noble cause and its early fulfillment.

I thank you all for your presence here.