



**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President
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62nd Pugwash Conference on Science & World Affairs

“Confronting New Nuclear Dangers”

Astana, Kazakhstan | 25 August 2017

Check against delivery.

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

“Will the war of words go nuclear?”

“The war of words could lead to a nuclear war.”

“The war of words raises prospects of nuclear arms race.”

These were some of the headlines in the press only a few days ago.

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference is urgently needed and my thanks go to all those who made it possible and to all of you for being here today.

As you may know, I am not only President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly but also Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. So, needless to say, this issue is one that is near and dear to my heart – figuratively but unfortunately also literally.

I come from Carinthia, a lovely part of Austria bordering Italy. Only two hours’ drive and you are at the blue and sunny Italian shores of the Adriatic Sea. At the same distance there is Aviano, the nuclear outfitted NATO airbase. In case of an attack on Aviano, my home region would suffer severe fallout and become uninhabitable.

A nuclear bomb doesn’t care for borders. Radioactivity doesn’t care for political or military neutrality. It doesn’t discriminate – in the end it threatens all of us.

I therefore welcome the important step that 122 countries took in the first week of July when they voted in New York for the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

This was a declaration that the question of nuclear disarmament is not a topic exclusively belonging to the nuclear powers, but that we all should have a say in it.

On our Annual Session this year in Minsk the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution, in which we welcomed the efforts to establish an international ban against the possession, acquisition, or deployment of nuclear weapons.

And we urge all OSCE countries to pursue disarmament in good faith.

This might come as a surprise as a majority of our members come from nuclear weapon States or from States that are under the nuclear protection shield.

But in fact, this resolution was only the latest in a long line of recommendations issued by the Parliamentary Assembly on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Over the past 15 years the PA has addressed matters related to nuclear weapons dozens of times in our declarations and resolutions.

While the OSCE has historically been more involved in efforts to control and reduce conventional arms and armed forces, the issue of nuclear disarmament is clearly and with no doubt a matter of deepest concern for our organization, as of course, both issues are closely connected with each other.

You cannot have a common security system for the huge OSCE area built on trust and cooperation and at the same time threaten each other with nuclear annihilation.

While nuclear détente was characterized by historic efforts at arms control, we sadly see today the return of nuclear deterrence and breakdowns in nuclear weapons reduction agreements.

We see a disconnect between what most of the world wants and the policies that a handful of nuclear powers are pursuing.

One hundred and twenty-two countries have issued a clear call that it is now time to get serious about disarmament. The nuclear powers, however, continue to brandish these weapons and include them in their national security strategies.

Several nuclear weapons States – including Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom – will not even agree to pledge a no-first-use policy.

We therefore must continue to send a clear message: We do not accept the use of these weapons, with their potentially catastrophic humanitarian consequences. And we do not even accept their existence. Why, after all – if something can never be used because it is too dangerous and horrific – why should it exist in the first place?

So what can we do to get our message through and to increase the pressure on the nuclear weapon States and their supporters?

As a parliamentarian and a leader on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, I can tell you that there are many things that parliamentarians can do to support these efforts.

First of all we can help to boost the signing and swift ratification of the Nuclear Ban Treaty. This should be one of our most urgent tasks at the moment. Although the nuclear weapons States

have regrettably abstained – this treaty is vitally important as a strong international norm against nuclear weapons and a legal framework for their prohibition.

We must also continue to press for the implementation of the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. There are still some States that haven't signed and ratified it. We need to lobby and convince them to do it, so that it may finally enter into force.

Parliamentarians can also encourage their national governments to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their strategic postures and to adopt unambiguous no-first-use policies. We can further work with our governments and our militaries to encourage negotiations of new, extensive and substantial cuts to nuclear arsenals. And we can advocate for irreversible reductions of stockpiles.

This year we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Almaty Declaration, which laid the foundation for the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone. We can co-operate with governments to strengthen the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and to revive the process to create a Middle East Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zone.

Finally we can draw attention to non-proliferation issues and work with civil society to raise awareness on the risks, the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons to strengthen disarmament movements. We urgently need the support of civil society.

And, of course, we need dialogue.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly provides a forum and platform for dialogue and confidence-building.

We will continue to build bridges across the OSCE region and work for a future of peace and prosperity – a future that hopefully does not include nuclear weapons.

Lastly one more point: as much as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly advocates for nuclear disarmament and a Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty, it also has to recognize the right of the OSCE participating States to decide for themselves whether they want to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. But it is of great importance to us that it happens in the safest and most secure way possible.

As such, we see the formal inauguration of the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium Bank in Kazakhstan as a very important step to curb proliferation and guarantee security.

Thank you.