

**Secretary-General's statement to the Geneva Lecture:
Resetting the nuclear disarmament agenda**

Geneva, Switzerland, 5 October 2009

It is a great privilege and personal honour to welcome you to the Geneva Lecture Series. Our subject today is "Resetting the Nuclear Disarmament Agenda" - and our speaker has spent a lifetime resetting our world. Mikhail Gorbachev is a towering global leader. Nobel laureate. A visionary. A transformative figure for meaningful action and lasting change. He introduced the term "perestroika" and "glasnost" into the global lexicon. And in Reykjavik more than twenty years ago, he helped reaffirm the vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

After many years of laying dormant, that goal is back where it belongs: at the top of the global agenda. One year ago this month, I proposed a five-point action plan for nuclear disarmament, including a special summit meeting of the Security Council. Last week, the Security Council convened its first-ever Summit on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I am very encouraged and pleased that the first ever Security Council meeting on nuclear disarmament was convened last week. As you know, the Security Council convened this meeting and adopted a landmark historic resolution. It was a remarkable event, only the fifth time in United Nations history that heads of state met around that familiar table in the Security Council Chamber, including the President of China, Hu Jintao, attending for the first time ever. U.S. President Barack Obama presided as you well know. He and the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev, have set an ambitious course of action to reduce nuclear arsenals and delivery vehicles.

At the same time, there is an outpouring of new ideas from civil society and governments. Together, all of this is helping to put the great train of nuclear disarmament on the right track. Of course, the aim is not new. In 1946, the General Assembly's first resolution identified the goal of eliminating such weapons, along with other weapons "adaptable to mass destruction". The greatest challenge in nuclear disarmament has always been the task of bridging the gap between words and deeds.

There are five central challenges we must confront to get there.

The first, transparency. More than 60 years after the first General Assembly resolution, and more than 30 years since the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), there are reportedly over 23,000 nuclear weapons still in existence. I say "reportedly" because no one knows how many such weapons exist. No one knows how much fissile material is currently available that could be used in making such weapons. The world needs facts and figures to help define the scope of the challenge of disarmament, to monitor and ensure its achievement, and to promote accountability.

Number two challenge, that is the issue of irreversibility. There can be no stable or permanent disarmament if there are worries about cheating or open re-armament.

Third, verification. This includes specific legal and institutional measures to ensure that states are complying with their obligations in this field.

Number four, any commitment to eliminate the world's deadliest weapon can only be achieved with the most binding of all legal obligations. This could take the form of a multilateral nuclear-weapon convention. It could emerge as a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments. Whatever the form it may be, the commitment must have the force of law.

All of these challenges relate to substantive issues of disarmament.

But there is the fifth and perhaps even greater importance and greater challenge that precedes all the others: the challenge of exercising much needed political will.

That brings me to the subject of leadership, and today's featured speaker. Former President Gorbachev is a giant in the global effort to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. He has made his mark through his pioneering efforts at the helm of his country?through his own nuclear disarmament proposals? through his tireless advocacy?and through the work of his Foundation and with non-governmental organizations around the world. Day by day, we can see signs of new construction on that bridge between words and deeds of disarmament. As we reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons, we must also work to limit conventional armaments.

I have often said, the world is over-armed and peace is under-funded. As global military spending continues to soar above \$1 trillion a year, reducing such expenditures and allocating those resources to meet the Millennium Development Goals will require considerable leadership and public support in the years ahead.

Former President Gorbachev once wrote, "It took political will to transcend the old thinking and attain a new vision." What more can be done to sustain this political will, which is so indispensable in achieving a global nuclear disarmament? Let us, together, welcome our distinguished speaker, and learn the answer from him. Thank you very much.