

Speaking Points Reto Wollenmann

OSCE Forum - Cooperative security and a nuclear-weapons-free world

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Switzerland's perspective on the "humanitarian approach of nuclear disarmament"

Mr. President of the Basel-Stadt Canton,

Honorable Members of Parliament,

Honorable Mayors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the kind introduction and for organizing this timely conference in this fantastic chamber.

Let me assure of the support of Switzerland for the efforts of the Basel Peace Office.

We heard earlier today that an integrated security agenda is necessary for a world in which nuclear weapons can one day be eliminated.

As a representative of the Swiss FDFA, I could not agree more.

"Global zero" will not be possible unless we come up with credible concepts for security and stability in a post-nuclear weapons world.

This requires measures such as a strengthening of cooperative security frameworks. We need more solid institutional arrangements to manage power relations, and we need consolidated norms to provide security for all of us and for future generations.

Frameworks like the OSCE, which are inclusive and provide for both dialogue and common action on the ground to advance stability, are playing a crucial role.

In my remarks today, I am going to focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons... But let me stress that it is very much in the disarmament community's interest to help provide for creative and credible answers about the "security question" if we wish to see decisive progress towards "global zero".

LACK OF SUFFICIENT PROGRESS

While humanity has made big strides concerning the prohibition and total elimination of both biological and chemical weapons, we have not made the progress needed in nuclear disarmament.

- nuclear weapons still play a prominent role in the security doctrines of Nuclear Weapons States and their allies.
- around 1600 nuclear weapons (!) are still kept on a high level of readiness – in other words they can be fired within minutes.
- nuclear reductions occurred, but have been mainly about retiring old warheads, and all nuclear weapons states have programmes to modernize the nuclear weapon systems they possess.

Many States, including Switzerland, are concerned by this slow progress. First, because these existing nuclear weapons present a real danger to peace & stability as well as to human security. Second, because this situation has a negative impact on the sustainability of the NPT, could undermine the non-proliferation norm, and lead to a further increase and spread of nuclear arsenals.

To overcome this slow pace – as well as the deadlock in various UN disarmament fora – a change of paradigm is necessary. In other words: nuclear disarmament has been in need of a push for quite a while.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION

For decades, the nuclear disarmament debate primarily focused on international security, of strategic stability. Mutually assured destruction was the keyword.

But in 2010 – the so-called humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons emerged, a dimension that has gradually gathered steam over the past few years.

This story really began with a remarkable statement made in 2010 by the then ICRC President, Mr. Jakob Kellenberger who said that "the ICRC finds it difficult to envisage how a use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the rules of international humanitarian law"

Shortly after, Switzerland, together with other NPT States Parties, managed to include, in the Final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, a crucial paragraph related to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. The Conference expressed its “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons” and reiterated “the need for all States, at all times, to comply with international law, including international humanitarian law”.

Subsequently, the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies adopted not only resolutions but also agreed on a very concrete 4-year action plan towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The new way of looking at nuclear weapons clearly also had a profound impact on the NGO community. ICAN, a global campaign coalition emerged, bringing hundreds of organizations under one roof with one goal: to initiate and support negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

The support for the humanitarian dimension on the side of States is really exemplified by the development of one of its main vehicles, a joint statement.

- This started with the support of 16 States in April 2012 at the 1st NPT PrepCom.
- In October 2013, a similar joint statement in the First Committee of the UNGA was supported by 125 States.
- And at that Conference even a second humanitarian statement by 17 states was made, which took a somewhat different stand than the statement by the 125 but which also stated the importance of the humanitarian approach.

The humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament was also discussed outside established frameworks such as the NPT and UNGA.

In March 2013, Norway organised an international conference on the immediate and long-term humanitarian impact of the use of nuclear weapons. This conference’s goal was to deepen the understanding of the effects of nuclear weapons through a fact-based discussion. This was long overdue. 127 States took part in this Conference. It was also marked by a strong participation from international organisations and civil society. The Oslo conference definitely succeeded in “reframing the debate”: We speak very differently about nuclear weapons now, compared to the time before Oslo.

And in February 2014, States met in “Nayarit” in Mexico. There was even broader participation (146 states) than in Oslo, and we saw important contributions from the UN system, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Academia and civil society. We also saw impressive testimonies by the Hibakushas – the Japanese survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Survivors of nuclear testing also presented evidence. And Austria announced it will host a third conference later this year, in early December 2014 in Vienna.

Like in Oslo, the key component in Nayarit were the facts-based discussions:

- o on the devastating immediate and direct humanitarian consequences that any NWS use or explosion would have;
- o on the severe long term consequences on human health, food security, the climate etc.;
- o on the risk associated with nuclear weapons.
 - On the one hand the risk associated with nuclear weapons detonations: Nayarit showed that probabilities are underestimated, that they are greater than zero.
 - On the other hand the broader risks associated with nuclear safety, security, or with health and environmental effects related to the nuclear complex. Bottom line: the risk is very real.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE

But what are, what can be the effects of the humanitarian initiative? What are the policy implications of the humanitarian initiative?

First, I would say that the value of the humanitarian focus lies to large part in its contribution to the “reframing of the debate”. It was high time to shift from the narrative that nuclear weapons are security providers to a new narrative which takes nuclear weapons for what they are: incredibly powerful and uniquely destructive weapons, which, if used, whether by accident, miscalculation or intentionally, would cause unacceptable harm. They are weapons of mass destruction.

Second, and related to the first point, we also hope the humanitarian dimension will help diminish the value nuclear weapons as security and political tools, making eventually their possession something recognized as “fundamentally wrong”. This could really pave the way for further disarmament efforts.

Third, we very much hope that focusing on the effects of nuclear weapons and their unacceptable humanitarian consequences will contribute to reinforcing the taboo associated with these weapons. We hope this will help extend forever the non-use of nuclear weapons effectively in practice since 1945.

Fourth, we hope putting the humanitarian issue at the center of the debate will unite the international community – and strengthen existing instruments and institutions. The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are indeed the very raison d’être of the NPT. Rather than a

distraction – as some fear - we hope this will be beneficial for the NPT process and its credibility, and also inspire other disarmament fora and processes.

Finally, and fifth, there is the issue of additional legally binding instruments to advance nuclear disarmament. Switzerland is in favour of starting negotiations on a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material. But we also wish to explore other options for complementing the legal framework. This should be done in an ambitious, non-sequential, “step-by-step” approach where blockages on one issue will not lead to inaction on all other possible steps.

Some of the crucial questions to clarify regarding this fifth point are:

- What type of instrument, or combination of instruments, are appropriate and achievable?
- In which forum could such an instrument be negotiated?
- Whether all, or if not all, how many, States possessing nuclear weapons, would need to participate in such negotiations?

This last question is a key challenge: Inclusivity... Let me say a few more words about this.

On the one hand, we have to get out of a nuclear disarmament stalemate which is also due to the fact that in many disarmament fora, any state wishing to block process can use a “de facto veto”. This has been a recipe for sustained blockage. It is already a good start that Non-nuclear weapon states have taken a clearer stand in nuclear disarmament (and this is maybe also because of the convincing narrative of the humanitarian dimension).

On the other hand, we need to encourage as many states as possible that are possessing nuclear weapons to engage and participate in these negotiations. Here we clearly have a lot of work to do. If the humanitarian dimension should not be sufficient to convince all possessors there are other convincing avenues:

- First: the cost argument – how much money does it take to keep such weapons safe and reliable?
- Second: The discussion about military utility – are these weapons really still necessary? Did they decide the Second World War? Is nuclear deterrence a good “insurance policy”?
- Third: the risks discussion – if the consequences of nuclear weapons are so devastating, and the probability for a nuclear confrontation is not zero... is the risk really acceptable?

To convince nuclear weapon states of these aspects will require facts. And it will require determination. And most of all: dialogue.

And we hope the next conference in Vienna can generate all of this. And we hope the P5 will participate so this will be a two-way dialogue.

There are various dividing lines right now.

- One obvious gap is between NWS and NNWS
- Other gaps exist between NWS
- A third gap exists between the deterrence community and the disarmament community.
(Two competing logics)

Switzerland is convinced of the need to close these gaps. And for this we need to foster dialogue and build bridges.

We hope that the humanitarian dimension – together with other facts-based approaches – can be decisive new elements, which take us forward on the path of nuclear disarmament. We truly believe that the Humanitarian Dimension can be translated into action, in order to achieve the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons can be.

We have great hopes that all nuclear weapons possessors will engage in all relevant discussions, in good faith, and with the willingness to avoid – once and for all – *“the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples”*.

Ladies and gentlemen, this was a quote from the first preliminary paragraph of the NPT, which – I would say - underlines once more that the humanitarian dimension is in the DNA of the NPT.

And with this, I will conclude my remarks and thank you for your attention. And of course I am happy to answer questions later...