

Speech by Uri Rosenthal, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, at the official opening of the 4th International Conference on ‘Nuclear Dilemmas: Present and Future’, Peace Palace, The Hague, 30 August 2011

Secretary of State Saudabayev, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

President Obama said in Prague that ‘As the world has become less divided, it has become more interconnected. And we've seen events move faster than our ability to control them -- a global economy in crisis, a changing climate, the persistent dangers of old conflicts, new threats and the spread of catastrophic weapons.’

The interconnectedness that President Obama mentions certainly holds for our security, freedom and prosperity. These are in my view the key principles of 21st century international policy. Violations of individual freedoms and of human rights are not only morally reprehensible; sooner or later, they lead to unrest, instability and economic decline. Security and freedom are fundamental to economic growth. Social and political turbulence will sooner or later be highly damaging to foreign investments and foreign trade. In their turn, lack of economic growth and structural unemployment go hand in hand with unrest and social turmoil. Indeed, they are interconnected.

The national security of our states has become increasingly dependent on regional and international developments. Especially in facing emerging transnational threats, such as terrorism, organised crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and cyber threats, we must achieve greater unity of purpose and action indeed, as last year's successful OSCE Summit in Astana under Kazakhstan's presidency rightly stated.

Promoting international peace and stability has always been and continues to be a key component of Dutch foreign policy. The Peace Palace, where we are gathered today, bears witness to our long tradition and active role in the field of international law. So it is with great pleasure that I welcome you here.

This conference, co-hosted by the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Asser Institute, should help keep non-proliferation and disarmament high on the international community's agenda. It should inspire us all to keep working towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Of course, this goal will not be reached overnight. It will probably be the next generation, or later generations, that will live to see it, rather than our own.

But it is crucial not to lose momentum now. Significant progress was made last year on nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. Not only did the Russian Federation and the US sign the New START Treaty, agreeing concrete and immediate steps to reduce their strategic nuclear arsenals. There was also a successful Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains our key instrument in combating the spread and production of nuclear weapons.

At the Review Conference, for the first time in many years, consensus was reached among the NPT parties. The result was a bold new Action Plan, which will be a roadmap towards the next Review Conference in 2015. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said at the 2010 Conference, 'The world still lives under the nuclear shadow.' It is still there. Now we need initiatives to continue in the spirit of the 2010 Review Conference and remove that shadow. The Netherlands will continue to make innovative, practical proposals to implement the 2010 Action Plan.

Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control have always been and will remain cornerstones of Dutch foreign policy, with the Non-Proliferation Treaty as our foundation and the Action Plan as our roadmap. This is an essential part of our commitment to strengthen international law and security. For us, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control are facets of the same diamond.

Disarmament is not an easy task, and demands a prudent and phased approach. We need to take into account current and future security structures and concerns. NATO's new Strategic Concept clearly states, 'We are resolved to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in accordance with the goals of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty'. At the same time, 'as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance'.

It is clear that we need a prudent, realistic, step-by-step approach. Step-by-step, phase-by-phase. The recent joint proposal by Poland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands for more transparency between NATO and the Russian Federation about sub-strategic arms in Europe is a good example. However, eliminating nuclear arsenals is not the sole responsibility of Europe, NATO or the nuclear weapon states. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are indeed a concern for the whole world. International cooperation and trust are essential indeed.

The Netherlands is a member of the Group of Ten countries that launched the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), which links these issues. At the ministerial NPDI meeting in Berlin on 30 April this year, we decided to press for greater transparency in the way nuclear weapons states report their disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts. At the same time we have stepped up our efforts for universal accession to the IAEA's Additional Protocol. This is vital to ensure that nuclear activities remain peaceful. I can mention an additional Dutch contribution to the IAEA of €100,000 to help countries that have not yet ratified the Additional Protocol to do so, and to provide practical technical assistance with its implementation in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Namibia, with their big reserves of uranium. These are the kind of practical steps we need.

The Group of Ten NPDI states want to use initiatives like these to advance the global disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation agenda and make serious work of the NPT Action Plan. In September my colleagues and I will meet in New York to determine the progress made on our Berlin agenda and to agree new proposals. I want us to agree on a way to overcome the decade-long deadlock in the international Conference on Disarmament, which has kept us from starting negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. The start of these negotiations is long overdue. We need to move forward – preferably within the Conference on Disarmament, but I am prepared to pursue alternative routes. A Working Group could prepare the ground for negotiations, for example, or negotiations could be launched, if need be, within the UN General

Assembly itself. We will also work on strengthening export controls, and share our experiences with others.

One of the crucial points in the NPT Action Plan is the agreement on practical steps, including an International Conference, towards establishing a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. In the run-up to this conference, we will continue to play an active role.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are here in the Peace Palace, but I'd like to take you on an imaginary trip to the Semipalatinsk Test Site in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The former Soviet Union held hundreds of nuclear tests there, regardless of the effects they would have on local residents and the environment. To this very day people in Semipalatinsk and its vicinity are suffering from cancer, genetic defects, birth defects and a range of deformities.

The Semipalatinsk Test Site shows how important it is for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to enter into force. We must work hard. Only that can make nuclear tests a thing of the past. I urge all countries that have not signed or ratified the treaty to do so. We only need nine more states to ratify for the treaty to enter into force. Let's go for that.

But ending nuclear tests is not enough. Today, the proliferation of these nuclear weapons is one of the gravest threats to international peace and stability.

I am thinking in particular of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Iran needs to restore international confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear activities.

How is it possible, when all IAEA member states know that there is something very wrong in Iran, for Iran to continue ignoring the calls of the international community? I call on the Iranian regime not only to hide behind rhetoric, but at long last to *act*. We need transparency about the full extent of its nuclear programme – especially of its programme's possible military

dimensions. All this is still unclear to the international community. Iran needs to meet its international obligations, as laid down in several UN Security Council Resolutions.

Nuclear activities like the recently discovered enrichment facility in North Korea are also intensifying our concerns about that country's nuclear programme. We urge the North Korea to return to the six-party talks and to accept safeguards for all its nuclear facilities.

Furthermore, nuclear terrorism is defined by NATO as a new threat. It is a real threat with grave consequences. We must do everything in our power to make sure terrorists never get their hands on nuclear weapons. This is a fundamental objective of Dutch foreign policy. In meeting this challenge, international cooperation is vital. The Netherlands is fully committed to the implementation of the Work Plan of the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington and is actively engaged in preparing the next Summit in Seoul.

For that matter, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) is essential. We hosted its plenary in 2009, following Kazakhstan in 2007. This initiative allows us to pool our information, experience and expertise and to integrate our capabilities and resources to fight nuclear terrorism. A good example of what we need is the cooperation between the US, Kazakhstan and the Netherlands on orphaned radioactive sources in Kazakhstan. These sources are listed, cleaned up and secured in central storages to prevent terrorists or other criminal groups from acquiring them to make, let me call it with a euphemism, a 'dirty bomb'. The Netherlands has committed half a million dollars to this project.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Not only the military uses of nuclear technology but also its civilian uses pose several dilemmas. In the light of our growing energy needs, the Dutch government has a positive stance on nuclear energy and will continue using it. At the same time, the recent disaster in Japan was a fearsome reminder that nuclear energy demands strict control and regulation. And that indeed nuclear power plants meet the highest safety and security standards. The Netherlands has always been at the forefront on this issue. We were the first country in Europe to have all its nuclear installations

undergo an IAEA Peer Review to ensure that they meet the highest safety and security standards. We believe that all states need to follow suit.

The Netherlands is currently the Chair Country of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Nuclear supplier countries aiming to guard against proliferation while safeguarding trade in nuclear goods and technologies for peaceful uses - that's what the Nuclear Suppliers Group is about. That's why we are determined to make it a success.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Dutch government is honoured to join Kazakhstan and the Asser Institute in hosting this 4th International Conference on non-proliferation and disarmament sponsored by the Government of Kazakhstan. Let's make it a success.

Thank you.