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Nuclear disarmament: Building the political will

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for your kind invitation.

I feel very honored to speak to such a distinguished audience and experts.

If we want to talk about building political will, we have to bear in mind the whole range and the controversy between the positions of different important actors. Firstly, we have the perspective and frustration of the non-nuclear weapons states; secondly, the request of the de-facto nuclear weapons states to be recognized as nuclear powers; and thirdly, the tentative approach of the P5, to find a basis for discussion prior to negotiations.

The different interests of different groups of states obstruct progress on negotiations. Discussions take place against each other instead in dialogue form.

Therefore, it is crucial for the political process that civil society got involved. The activists are engaged citizens and experts. Their activities have contributed considerable to the debate about nuclear disarmament.

What can we do as Parliamentarians? We can place nuclear disarmament on the agendas in our national parliaments, and in international parliamentary assemblies. This will raise the public knowledge of the issue and encourage actors in our government who argue for nuclear disarmament.

The Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation of the German Bundestag is regularly informed about progress on problems for nuclear disarmament and discusses the Federal Government's position in these issues sometimes critically. Nuclear disarmament has a special meaning in our Parliament. In previous years, a consensus has developed in the German Parliament regarding nuclear disarmament. Before the last two NPT-review conferences, the Bundestag debated nuclear disarmament and passed two motions on it. We held discussions with representatives of civil society organizations. These activities contributed to political support for arms control processes.

On the international level, the situation has deteriorated in the last years. The differences between nuclear powers, especially between the United States and Russia, grew due to the rising conflict in Ukraine. There are mutual accusations about compliance to the INF-Treaty, which are still not resolved. I regret that neither Russia nor the US explain the exact nature of their accusations to the public. At least both sides are interested in fulfilling their treaty obligations, for instance to New START. But on the whole the will to new substantial disarmament steps has diminished. Many fear that there will be no new disarmament negotiations before the expiration of New START. Germany is therefore supporting the trilateral Deep Cuts Commission, hoping that this trilateral track 2 dialogue stimulates the readiness for further negotiations on the reduction of Russian and United States' strategic nuclear arms.

In this situation, it is important to sustain the disarmament and arms control treaties and agreements we have. This means complying with existing treaties and to adapt them if necessary and possible.

As this year marks the 20th anniversary since the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Germany supports the diplomatic efforts of the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Lassina Zerbo, to convince the

8 states from the annex 2 list of the CTBT, which not yet signed or ratified the CTBT to sign and/or ratify.

A further proposal by Zerbo of a nuclear test free zone in the Middle East could overcome the deadlock between the annex 2 states in that region.

President Obama mentioned in his recent op-ed in the Washington Post that he has reduced the role of nuclear weapons in the US security strategy. This is an important step and an important approach complementing to the quantitative aspect of disarmament. All states relying at the moment on nuclear deterrence should reduce the role and importance of nuclear weapons in their security strategies.

In this context, I welcome and support the proposal of President Obama for further reductions beyond the New START Treaty and his proposal for the integration of substrategic nuclear weapons in further talks. An important step could be to create more transparency and to develop new initiatives for confidence building measures.

Therefore, we want NATO to discuss the role of nuclear weapons and search for ways to further reduce their strategic importance. This has to take into account the security interests of all NATO-Partners. We should not ignore the connection between strategic stability and conventional and nuclear capabilities some states emphasize.

At the same time the security needs of the non-nuclear weapons states also have to be taken into account, who are equally threatened by the risk of nuclear use although they do not rely on nuclear weapons for their security.

NATO should actively seek to create the conditions necessary for a world without nuclear weapons, but should not use this to block further initiatives in nuclear disarmament.

On 1 January 2016 Germany assumed the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Especially in times of crisis, the OSCE provides a forum for maintaining channels of communication and dialogue. Part of the core tasks of the first dimension of the OSCE are confidence- and security building measures.

The German parliament promotes the modernization of the Treaty on Open Skies and its cooperative implementation. In this context, Germany will procure its own national observation aircraft in 2017 to 18. While its primary role is the monitoring of compliance to the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe and the Vienna Document, the OS Treaty explicitly allows aerial observation in other fields. This can be used for the Control of Nuclear Forces Sites.

Russia and the US are the main actors in nuclear disarmament because they command more than 90% of the global nuclear arsenal. Nevertheless, the actions of the other Nuclear Weapons states count as well. We are facing a modernization process in every nuclear weapons state, be it official or not. In some cases the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategies is increased (Pakistan, North Korea).

The establishment of an international fuel bank will secure future need for nuclear fuel for civil use as long as some non-nuclear states still run nuclear power plants. This facilitates our engagement against nuclear weapons proliferation. By the way: Germany will shut down its nuclear power plants till 2022, and I hope that other countries will follow our example because 30 years after Chernobyl and 5 years after Fukushima we know a lot about the deadly risk of nuclear power plants.

International parliamentary assemblies provide valuable opportunities for dialogue between Parliamentarians. As shown in the OSCE PA or the IPU, it is possible to build consensus positions, which could have a positive influence on national policies.

I welcome the Hiroshima Declaration of the G7 and support most of it. But actions should be more bold. This depends on the political will.

In my view very important is the contribution of the Humanitarian Initiative, which vitalized the debate on nuclear disarmament, e. g. leading to the OEWG. I am sure that all nuclear weapon states would be more credible, if they would be a constructive participant of that discussion.

Parliamentarians can contribute to building the political will to disarmament, but we need support and pressure from NGO's – and some interest by the media.