

THE U.S. NUCLEAR POSTURE

In this issue

Assessing Nuclear Forces	1
U.S. Expected To Pull Out Tactical Weapons	2
U.S.-Japan Accord For Seeking A Nuke-Free World	3
People's Pressure Vital (Part I)	4
People's Pressure Vital (Part II)	5
Indo-Pak Rivalry Jeopardizes Disarmament	6

DISCLAIMER: The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of IPS Europe.

ASSESSING NUCLEAR FORCES

Nearly two decades after the Cold War ended, the Barack Obama administration is carrying out the third subsequent assessment of the roles and missions for the U.S. nuclear forces and the associated production and maintenance infrastructure. The Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations completed their nuclear posture reviews (NPR) in 1994 and 2001, respectively.

The 2010 NPR is viewed by many as an opportunity for significant progress on nuclear disarmament, energized by President Obama's joint commitment with his Russian counterpart, President Dmitriy Medvedev, to work toward a "nuclear-free world".

"Key policy determinations made during the review will also impact the implementation of Washington's ambitious arms control and non-proliferation agenda, which includes negotiation of a Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) follow-on agreement as well as achievement of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and a favourable outcome at the 2010 review conference of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)," says Anya Loukianova of the 'Monterey Institute for International Studies, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies'.

However, fulfilling Obama's vision of reduced reliance on nuclear weapons is challenged by a lack of consensus in the policy-making community, the federal bureaucracy, Congress, and the public at large on the nuclear deterrent's role in ensuring U.S. security as well as that of its allies.

In a landmark April 5, 2009, speech in Prague, President Obama said, as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act to bring about "the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

He also proclaimed that: "... the United States will take concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons. To put an end to Cold War thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and urge others to do the same."

The president's Prague speech provides the "great strategic framework" for the reassessment of the U.S. nuclear posture by the Department of Defence. Legislative language stipulates that the administration submit a report to Congress on the following issues:

- "1) The role of nuclear forces in United States military strategy, planning, and programming;
- 2) the policy requirements and objectives for the United States to maintain a safe, reliable, and credible nuclear deterrence posture;
- 3) the relationship among United States nuclear deterrence policy, targeting strategy, and arms control objectives;
- 4) the role that missile defence capabilities and conventional strike forces play in determining the role and size of nuclear forces;
- 5) the levels and composition of the nuclear delivery systems that will be required for implementing the United States national and military strategy, including any plans for replacing or modifying existing systems;
- 6) the nuclear weapons complex that will be required for implementing the United States national and military strategy, including any plans to modernize or modify the complex; and
- 7) the active and inactive nuclear weapons stockpile that will be required for implementing the United States national and military strategy, including any plans for replacing or modifying warheads."

Voices of the South on Globalization is a monthly newsletter intended to inspire a meaningful North-South Dialogue by raising awareness for global interdependences and by offering a forum for voices from the South in the globalization debate. Each edition will present short analyses or commentaries from a Southern perspective on one particular issue of the globalization process.

Voices of the South on Globalization is published by IPS Europe with financial support from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

For further information please contact:

IPS-Inter Press Service Europe,
 Ramesh Jaura, Marienstr. 19/20, 10117 Berlin
 Tel.: ++49-(0)30-28 48 23 60
 Fax: ++49-(0)30-28 48 2369
 rjaura@ipseuropa.org

U.S. EXPECTED TO PULL OUT TACTICAL WEAPONS

The much awaited review of U.S. nuclear forces in Washington's global strategy in the coming years is expected to reduce the role of atomic weapons in regional scenarios and retire the nuclear-armed Tomahawk sea-launched land-attack cruise missile, according to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

"To reinforce U.S. commitments to our allies and partners, we will consult closely with them on new, tailored, regional deterrence architectures that combine our forward presence, relevant conventional capabilities (including missile defenses), and continued commitment to extend our nuclear deterrent. These regional architectures and new capabilities, as detailed in the Ballistic Missile Defense Review and the forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review, make possible a reduced role for nuclear weapons in our national security strategy."

There are two parts -- with some overlap -- to the regional mission: the role of nuclear weapons against regional adversaries such as North Korea, Iran, and Syria; and the role of nuclear weapons deployed in Europe, explains Kristensen.

He refers to rumors which have circulated for long that the Obama administration will remove the requirement to plan nuclear strikes against chemical and biological weapons from the mission; to limit the role to deterring nuclear attacks.

"To reinforce U.S. commitments to our allies and partners, we will consult closely with them on new, tailored, regional deterrence architectures that combine our forward presence, relevant conventional capabilities (including missile defenses), and continued commitment to extend our nuclear deterrent. These regional architectures and new capabilities, as detailed in the Ballistic Missile Defense Review and the forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review, make possible a reduced role for nuclear weapons in our national security strategy."

There are two parts -- with some overlap -- to the regional mission: the role of nuclear weapons against regional adversaries such as North Korea, Iran, and Syria; and the role of nuclear weapons deployed in Europe, explains Kristensen.

He refers to rumors which have circulated for long that the Obama administration will remove the requirement to plan nuclear strikes against chemical and biological weapons from the mission; to limit the role to deterring nuclear attacks.

Doing so would remove Iran, Syria and others as nuclear targets unless they acquire nuclear weapons. A broader regional change could involve leaving regional deterrence against smaller regional adversaries (including North Korea) to non-nuclear forces and focus the nuclear mission on the large nuclear adversaries (Russia and China).

"An immediate consequence of the new architecture appears to be a decision to retire the nuclear Tomahawk sea-launched land-attack cruise missile (TLAM/N). According to a report by Kyodo News (see also report by Daily Yomiuri), Washington has told the Japanese government informally that it intends to retire the weapon. The 2009 Congressional Strategic Posture Commission report had recommended retaining the weapons, but neither the Pentagon nor the Japanese government apparently agreed," Kristensen writes on the FAS Strategic

Blog. The other part of review concerns the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe, where the U.S. Air Force currently deploys 150-200 nuclear bombs in 87 aircraft shelters at six bases in five countries, a reduction from approximately 480 bombs in 2001.

Some of the TLAM/Ns also are earmarked for support of NATO, but are stored on land in the United States. The weapons are the last remnant of the Cold War deployment of thousands of tactical nuclear weapons to deter a Soviet attack on Europe. Similar deployments in the Pacific ended two decades ago and pressure has been building for NATO to finally end the Cold War.

Germany has repeated demands for withdrawal of U.S. nuclear bombs on its territory. News agency reports said four other NATO countries were expected to do so. A spokesperson for the Belgian Prime Minister was reported saying that Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, together with Norway and Luxemburg, in the coming weeks will formally propose within NATO "that nuclear arms on European soil belonging to other NATO member states are removed":

Kristensen presumes that some coordination with Washington has taken place. "Otherwise, if the NPR does not recommend a withdrawal from Europe, the five countries' initiative will from the outset be in conflict with the Obama administration's nuclear policy, which NATO likely will follow."

The European initiative would, in fact, help the Obama administration justify a decision to withdraw the weapons from Europe by demonstrating that key NATO allies no longer see a need for the deployment. Extended nuclear deterrence would continue, as the ODR language underscores, but with long-range strategic weapons as it is done in the Pacific. Other than the forthcoming NPR, the political context for the European initiative is NATO's ongoing review of its Strategic Concept, scheduled for completion in November, writes Kristensen.

"The Obama administration might not want to preempt that review, so an alternative could be that the NPR concludes that the U.S. sees no need for the continued deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe but leaves it up to NATO's new Strategic Concept to make the formal decision. In that case, the initiative by the five NATO countries could serve to formally start that process within NATO."

Whether that means a complete withdrawal from Europe now, a decision to end the NATO strike portion -- a controversial Cold War mission that assigns nuclear weapons for delivery by Belgian, Dutch, German, and Italian aircraft -- and consolidating the remaining weapons at one or two U.S. bases in Europe, or something else remains to be seen. "But a reduction rather than complete withdrawal would achieve little," argues Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project of FAS. The Federation of American Scientists was founded in 1945 by scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bombs. - *Ramesh Jaura* ☑

U.S.-JAPAN ACCORD FOR SEEKING A NUKE FREE WORLD

Japan, the only country to be the target of atom bombs, and the U.S., the only country to drop them, firmly committed themselves to working towards a nuclear weapons free world, when President Barack Obama visited Japan during his first presidential tour of Asia.

The combination of these two nations in this endeavour gives their commitment special relevance and strength. It also offers the lesson to others that reaching out to the future is more creative than wallowing in the past.

Nuclear disarmament was high up on the agenda during Obama's state visit, and a 'Joint Statement toward a world without nuclear weapons' embodied the views and hopes of both governments. Both governments also welcomed current international interest in nuclear disarmament and reaffirmed their "determination to realize such a world".

For Obama, the joint statement confirmed his belief that nuclear disarmament can serve as the foundation of global peace and security. His approach to nuclear disarmament was endorsed by the Nobel Committee whose official statement announcing the award of the Peace Prize to Obama said that the committee "attached special importance to Obama's vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons".

For Japan, the emphasis on nuclear disarmament was a reminder of its unique experience, and reaffirmed its insistence that never again should such a human tragedy be visited on any country.

In this context, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Obama welcomed the support received for recent nuclear disarmament initiatives at the UN in which Japan and the U.S. played leading roles. They pledged to take practical steps that would create conditions in which the challenge of nuclear disarmament might be met. Some of the steps described in the joint statement are summarized below.

NEXT MOVES

Nuclear Disarmament: The U.S. will continue to seek early conclusion of a START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) follow-on treaty through negotiations with the Russian Federation. The U.S. and Japan urge all states that hold nuclear weapons to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national security strategy. They also urged states that hold nuclear weapons to respect the principles of transparency, verifiability and irreversibility in the process of nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Both countries reaffirmed the importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). They will cooperate on matters connected with the 2010 NPT Review Conference so that the treaty may be strengthened, and its central role in international non-proliferation efforts renewed. They expect the review conference to recommend realistic and achievable goals to strengthen each of the NPT's three pillars -- nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and nuclear disarmament.

Test Ban Treaty: Japan welcomed the Obama administration's intention to push for ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Japan and the U.S. will work together to achieve the early entry into force of the CTBT. They are also determined to

pursue the immediate commencement of negotiations on, and early conclusion of, a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

North Korea: In the view of both countries, North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons remains a major threat to peace and stability in Northeast Asia and the entire international community. Japan and the U.S. remain committed to the irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. They stress that the Six Party Talks remain the most effective framework to achieve these goals and they urge North Korea to return to the Six Party Talks without preconditions.

Iran: Iran's nuclear activities, in particular the recent disclosure of Iran's construction of a new facility near Qom, have reinforced the international community's concern regarding the nature of its nuclear program. Japan and the U.S. will continue to seek a comprehensive, long-term resolution of these issues, based on UN Security Council resolutions.

Nuclear Security: Both countries will cooperate in efforts to ensure the success of the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit that will be hosted by the U.S., and will as well promote regional efforts to strengthen nuclear security. Japan will host a nuclear security conference for Asian countries in Tokyo in January 2010. The U.S. welcomes this initiative, as well as Japan's decision to host the next preparatory meeting in December for the Nuclear Security Summit.

Nuclear Terrorism: Recognizing the continuing threat of nuclear terrorism, the two governments are committed to ensuring that civil nuclear materials and facilities receive the highest levels of physical protection. They also pledge their support for efforts to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years.

IAEA: The two countries expressed support for the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and welcomed the election of the new director general, Ambassador Yukiya Amano, who is due to assume office shortly. They will continue to back all measures that will give the agency the resources, authority, and verification capabilities necessary to carry out its essential mandate.

Peaceful uses of nuclear power: Japan and the U.S. intend to work together and with other countries to explore ways to enhance a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including assurances of fuel supply, so that countries can access peaceful nuclear power without increasing the risks of proliferation.

Some years ago, an Asian foreign minister said that if the international community was honest with itself, it would build a monument to the atom bomb outside UN headquarters in New York.

This would be a reminder of the reality, he argued, that it is the existence of nuclear power in the world and its capability to wreak global destruction, that is the best guarantee of international peace. Headlines are born of sentiments such as these, of course. - *Ernest Corea* ☑

PEOPLE'S PRESSURE VITAL (PART I)

'Cities and citizens of the world, unite! Unite for a world without nuclear weapons!' This is the clarion call Dr. Tadatashi Akiba, Mayor of the City of Hiroshima, would like to hear resonate in the remotest corners of the globe.

Because Dr. Akiba is convinced that "when cities become friends they become sister cities; when states become friends, they become military allies". Research and education should therefore pay more attention to cities' capabilities to promote peace and cooperation, he told a symposium titled 'Towards a World without Nuclear Weapons', organised by Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation.

Dr. Akiba is member of the Foundation's board and president of 'Mayors for Peace'. This non-governmental organization (NGO) is composed of cities around the world that strive to raise international public awareness of the need to abolish nuclear weapons and contribute to the realization of genuine and lasting world peace.

They do so by working to eliminate starvation and poverty, assist refugees fleeing local conflict, support human rights, protect the environment, and solve the other problems that threaten peaceful coexistence within the human family.

As of February 1, 2010, Mayors for Peace had 3,562 cities in 134 countries and regions as members. In March 1990, the Mayors' Conference was officially registered as a UN NGO related to the Department of Public Information.

In the run-up to the 65th anniversary of the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the Mayor of Hiroshima is discussing the possibility of hosting summer Olympic Games in 2020 in the city, the year by which the Mayors for Peace want to see all nuclear weapons abolished. The '2020 Vision' also envisages the ratification of the Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) by 2015.

The Mayors for Peace is as well working on a proposal so that the will of citizens may effectively be conveyed through the democratization of the United Nations by way of establishing an upper and a lower house in the UN system. The upper house would be made up of nation-states while the lower house would consist of 200 cities -- 100 of these with large populations and the other 100 with memories of war/conflicts.

The rationale of the proposal is that throughout history, cities have suffered human and environmental devastation that was inevitably cause. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Guernica and Auschwitz are only some of the examples.

"There is a city in Belgium," said Dr. Akiba, where poison gas was first used during World War I in 1915. People in that city have been offering memorial services every day for the last 90 years.

And there is a temple in Hiroshima which rings bells at 8:15 every morning -- to remember the dropping of the atom bomb in 1945 -- and pray for peace. "We have entered an era where citizens of cities can take initiative instead of states in changing the world."

Without the commitment and power of citizens, the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the Grameen Bank would not have materialised, Dr. Akiba pointed out. He was supported by Kuniko Inoguchi,

former Ambassador and head of the Japanese delegation to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva from 2002 to 2004. Inoguchi recalled that during her tenure as chair of the Conference "victims of small arms and light weapons, mines and cluster bombs were about half a million but delegates initially did not show much interest in dealing with this issue".

But when they testified at the UN, they turned the tide. "Those victims could come to the UN to testify only because they could get support from NGOs. At that time I thought that with the support from NGOs, atom bomb survivors may be able to influence the course of discussion on nuclear disarmament at the UN."

Inoguchi considers it vital to raise people's awareness of victims of all sorts of weapons -- "not just victims of nuclear weapons" -- and besides nurture bonds among victims of all sorts of weapons.

She welcomed President Barack Obama's decision to host a summit in April in Washington to discuss how to prevent nuclear proliferation, ahead of the landmark conference in May to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"Normally, this kind of conference would take place at ambassadorial level but making it a summit shows the priority being given to this issue worldwide now. The most effective way to impact the world is to have presidents and prime ministers to act jointly and this is exactly for what the stage is set now on nuclear weapons issue," Inoguchi said.

A major objective, she pointed out, is the U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). "If the U.S. moves, it would give a great impetus towards putting into effect the CTBT. Another important target is to promote discussion on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) this year," the former Japanese ambassador explained.

'SECOND NUCLEAR AGE'

Viewing nuclear abolition from yet another perspective, Dr. John E. Endicott, President of Woosong University, South Korea, said it was important to realise that the world has entered the Second Nuclear Age as Paul Bracken stated in his recent book.

For 200 years, the world has been shaped by Western military dominance. Gunboats were replaced by battleships as agents of national power, which in turn were replaced by cruise missiles and stealth bombers.

Until recently, these weapons belonged exclusively to Europeans or North Americans. "But this monopoly on advanced military technologies is now ending," Dr. Endicott stressed.

Ballistic missiles carrying conventional warheads or weapons of mass destruction (WMD), along with other cutting-edge technologies, are now within reach of as many as ten Asian nations from Israel to North Korea -- a major shift in the world's balance of power.

(Continued on page 5)

PEOPLE'S PRESSURE VITAL (PART II)

Dr. Endicott explained that the rise of Asian military power heralds the beginning of a Second Nuclear age as different from the first -- that of the Cold War following on the heels of World War II. The world that the West created is being challenged, not just in military ways but in cultural and philosophical terms as well.



"Just as Asia began asserting itself economically in the 1960s and

1970s, it now does so militarily, backed by arms that would make Western interference in Asia far more treacherous and costly -- even in peacetime -- than ever before," Dr. Endicott said.

Of course, the long-term objective must be a total elimination of Nuclear weapons but it is important to take every step possible towards the objective, however small those steps might appear to be -- for example, by way of creating regional bodies around Limited-Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zones (LNWFZ).

Those bodies should be enabled to take up coordinating tasks regarding local, economic, political and social development across the region. And a new international body in the era of Second Nuclear age must be absolutely inclusive.

All existing nuclear-weapons-free zones and LNWFZ should be allowed to deal with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the UN Security Council. "That is to say that regional bodies for East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East should all be included in this picture," Dr. suggested.

He pointed out that a fundamental condition for any international security system to be successful lies in its ability to face hard reality and adjust to changing circumstances.

"In today's world it is a hard reality that more than five nations do have nuclear weapons. It is time for international organizations to face and accept this reality. NPT regime, though one of successful surviving initiatives from Cold War days, must adjust itself to the new reality of the world and redefine itself.

"Let us start working on this urgent issue. The world would be forced to pay a terrible price if it fails to adjust itself to new realities from the 20th century. Let us not overlook this exciting opportunity of realizing a world free from nuclear weapons which is now within our reach," Dr. Endicott exhorted.

GREAT OPPORTUNITY

"We now have a great opportunity to move towards a world without nuclear weapons," agreed Hiromichi Umebayashi who moderated the discussion. An authority on the subject in his own right, Umebayashi pointed out that though President Obama's famous Prague speech in April 2009 has come to be viewed as a trigger for discussions on nuclear abolition, its roots go back to a symposium held in 2006 at the Hoover Institution in the United States.

The symposium marked the 20th anniversary of the 1986 Reykjavik summit where the then U.S. President Ronald Reagan and President Mikhail Gorbachev of then

Soviet Union agreed that there would not be any winner in a nuclear war and that nuclear weapons should be abolished from the planet earth.

Abolishing nuclear weapons is a rather complicated issues, said Umebayashi, who is special adviser to Peace Depot, a non-profit, independent peace research, education and information institution which aims to build a security system that does not rely on military power.

"We should keep in mind that although the fact that a U.S. president (Obama) made this commitment (to usher in a nuclear-weapons free world) is significant by itself, the bottom line is that it is up to us, the people of the world, whether our world would really move towards freeing itself from all nuclear weapons."

For this, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is the only standing institution within the UN system, former Japanese Ambassador Inoguchi said. "It has been recognized that the next disarmament treaty would be the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty but the bottleneck is that all the 66 member countries will have to agree on 'programm of works' before discussion can be initiated for the treaty."

There has been an argument to change this unanimous rule but question has also been raised about the effectiveness of making such a treaty without consent of some nuclear powers. "When I was the chairperson of the conference in 2003, we did substantive work for the Cutoff treaty, by way of Japan tabling a working paper for the treaty which will be used as a basis of discussion once formal negotiations for the treaty will be initiated," Inoguchi said.

She recalled that during the Bush (junior) administration, it was very difficult to advance, not to mention the difficulties of convincing nuclear powers outside of the NPT regime.

However, President Obama has consistently made it public as part of his commitment ever since he became a presidential candidate that he would make efforts to realize early initiation of the Cutoff treaty and this commitment was confirmed in his famous speech in Prague in April 2009.

"So the tide has turned and it has been agreed that the discussion for the treaty would be initiated. Although the Obama administration seems to be tied up (at home) with so many tough tasks such as health care reform, Japan's role should be to keep reminding Obama of his commitment and closely work with the U.S. to push forward for the realization of the treaty," concluded former Ambassador Inoguchi.

The fact that the symposium on such a critical issue as nuclear abolition took place at the Foundation named after Ozaki Yukio gave it an added weight. Yukio's life coincided with a century of transformation in Japan's history of finding an identity as a nation state and of founding the basis of a democratic government.

- Taro Ichikawa ☑

INDO-PAK RIVALRY JEOPARDIZES DISARMAMENT

Will the persistent distrust between Pakistan and India continue to litter the bumpy road to nuclear disarmament with shrapnel and spikes and bring to naught the multilateral conference in Geneva? Or, will the nuclear armed neighbours bury the hatchet defying legacy of the British divide-and-rule that culminated in partition in 1947, and rescue the Conference on Disarmament?

Bilateral peace talks -- begun in 2004 and suspended by India following the attacks in December 2008 that killed more than 160 people in the megacity of Mumbai -- are scheduled to resume on February 25 in New Delhi.

India has accused Pakistan of doing little to bring under control extremists allegedly based in Pakistan, whom it blames for the attack. New Delhi has proposed fresh talks which it wants to address counterterrorism and other matters that weigh on peace and security issues.

Islamabad however favours what it calls comprehensive peace negotiations that would involve the disputed Kashmir region.

The fear that the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, set up in 1979, might become "irrelevant" was expressed by the Secretary-General of the Conference, Sergei Ordzhonikidze, on February 11.

Ordzhonikidze, who is also the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, underscored that what the 65-nation Conference had done for the previous four weeks -- "for the enormous financial expenditure out of the United Nations budget -- was nothing". They had to recognize that.

That was not only intolerable in the Conference, but it was also becoming intolerable in international relations - with the most important United Nations body dealing with disarmament not able to do anything but even regressing.

He warned that unless the Conference was in tune with current trends in international relations it was "not relevant", Ordzhonikidze told the participants.

While it remains to be seen whether the Conference would advance in the new round beginning February 16 under the presidency of Ambassador Mikhail Khvostov of Belarus, Ordzhonikidze's unvarnished remarks tinged with deep disappointment were unprecedented but not groundless.

In 2009 the Conference broke a deadlock that had lasted for more than ten years. It agreed on a work plan that dealt with four issues: nuclear disarmament, a fissile material control treaty addressing highly-enriched uranium and plutonium, the prohibition of space-based weapons, and an agreement by nuclear-armed states not to use their strategic weapons against nations that do not possess such arsenal.

Pakistan initially approved the plan, but later withdrew its consent and demanded further consideration of the programme.

When the Conference resumed in January in Geneva, Pakistan temporarily blocked endorsement of an agenda for the year. Decisions at the international body must be made by consensus, and Pakistan allowed the agenda to be approved on January 27.

"It was not my government's intention to block adoption of the agenda," a news agency report quoted Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations Zamir Akram.

"We are very keen to move beyond consideration of the agenda to the more important task of working out a programme of work. We will make our contribution in this regard."

While this assurance sounded promising, Conference sources said that "Pakistan doesn't want to hear about" a fissile material cutoff treaty.

On behalf of the UN Secretary-General, Ordzhonikidze appealed to members to be "a little more flexible" and overcome the bickering over which items to tackle in 2010, known as the programme of work. "It is not the finalization of the elaboration of any treaty, it is just the programme of work," he said.

Parallel to deliberations at the Conference, a senior Indian diplomat said that a universal, transparent and verifiable regime of nuclear disarmament was the only way to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons. "India is deeply worried about the potential nexus between clandestine proliferation and terrorism and the ever-present danger of such weapons or vulnerable nuclear materials falling into the hands of jihadi and non-state actors," Shyam Saran, who led the team that negotiated the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, told the Global Zero summit in Paris on February 2.

"However, over the long term, it is also our view that it is only through the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and by putting in place universally applicable, nondiscriminatory and fully transparent verification procedures, that we can fully prevent and deny nuclear materials from falling into dangerous hands," Press Trust of India news agency quoted Saran.

India, like neighbouring Pakistan, possesses a nuclear arsenal and has refused to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) to be reviewed at a landmark UN conference in May 2010.

But Saran reaffirmed India's intention to maintain a suspension of nuclear testing and its interest in discussing a treaty that would prohibit member nations from producing fissile material for weapons purposes, the Indo-Asian News Service reported.

"Despite our well-known reservations on the Comprehensive (Nuclear) Test Ban Treaty, India is committed to its voluntary unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosive testing," he said at the summit in Paris.

"We are prepared to negotiate a verifiable fissile material cutoff treaty (FMCT) in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. We are not a party to the NPT and cannot respond to calls for universal adherence to that treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state," he said.

Saran also raised the matter of the proliferation network once operated by former top Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer (A. Q.) Khan widely regarded as the founder of Pakistan's nuclear program. A.Q. is viewed in Washington as a "serious proliferation risk" in view of allegations that he supplied critical nuclear technology to Iran and North Korea. - Ramesh Jaura ☑