



Report of the Secretary General

Paolo Cotta-Ramusino

**59th Pugwash Conference
Berlin, Germany
2 July 2011**

The goals of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs have been since 1957:

1. To warn against the risk that the use of nuclear weapons could destroy civilization and possibly mankind. In particular Pugwash has been in the last 54 years a strong advocate of nuclear and general disarmament, of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and of preventing nuclear proliferation.
2. To facilitate conflict resolution by means of dialogue and particularly by engaging scientists, leaders and policy makers of opposite fronts, especially in areas where nuclear weapons are a factor.
- 3.

Meeting in Berlin is an important reminder to us all that these goals can be achieved. To a significant extent, Europe has pulled back from the nuclear precipice, though there is still a long way to go. Dialogue, conflict resolution, confidence building measures, arms control and disarmament have all played a role in this change in Europe.

Pugwash made significant contributions to arms control during the Cold War era, to non-proliferation (in particular by strongly supporting the NPT), and was able to put together scientists, experts and leaders across the communist/capitalist divide. Today, the Pugwash approach is basically the same as in the past, while taking into account the significant changes that happened since the end of the Cold War. The capitalist/communist divide is no longer the main international demarcation. New dividing lines have appeared, maybe not so sharply defined as during the Cold War, but possibly more persistent. There are growing tensions and problems across religious and/or national identifications (most notably between the Islamic world on one side and the West and other countries on the other side). In this perhaps more complex environment, nuclear weapons are still present in large numbers and nuclear proliferation may be an even greater risk now than in the past.

Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation

Nuclear disarmament after the end of the Cold War has not materialized to the extent that many were hoping for. While some significant nuclear disarmament has been achieved, there are still more than 20,000 nuclear weapons on the planet, mostly in the hands of Russia and the US. New nuclear weapons states (beyond the original five) have appeared on the scene and more may be coming down the line. Now about half of the world population lives in countries that possess nuclear weapons. But even more than the number of the de-facto nuclear states, some specific trends cause concern.

Nuclear weapons still carry significant political weight, as the identification of the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the official nuclear weapon states reminds us every day. Moreover, lacking effective security guarantees for non-nuclear states, nuclear weapons are still a powerful instrument of intimidation. Those that are subjected to this intimidation are pushed and maybe encouraged to acquire a nuclear capability, if they do not have it already. Nuclear proliferators, suspected proliferators, or potential proliferators are too often considered as either benign, acceptable friends or as unacceptable, dangerous antagonists. While the first group enjoys

some degree of international support and cooperation (even in the field of nuclear activities), the so-called “bad” proliferators or “bad” suspected proliferators are subjected to pressures of various sorts, including sanctions, etc. This discrimination between bad and good proliferators or potential proliferators is increasing the interest, if not the compulsion, to acquire nuclear capabilities for deterrence purposes.

To change gears, strong disarmament initiatives, with significantly deep cuts are needed and must go well beyond what has been accomplished recently with New START. While New START is an important step in the right direction, we need further clear and strong signals pointing towards the reduction of the number and the reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons. If on the contrary, the political and military salience of nuclear weapons remains undiminished, further proliferation of nuclear weapons will be not only possible but, sooner or later, likely.

If one wants to quickly outline a possible plan of action, one should say that we need much faster nuclear disarmament by *all* countries that possess nuclear weapons, the entry into force of the CTBT, the establishment of an FMCT, the establishing of (negative) security guarantees towards all countries that do not possess nuclear weapons (without buts and ifs), the spread of the principle of no first use of nuclear weapons (possibly following the model of the 1925 Geneva protocol for chemical weapons). The idea of total elimination of nuclear weapons should be pushed forward not only by promoting lofty ideas of “global zero” but more fundamentally by implementing significant and visible steps to bring down both the number and the relevance of nuclear weapons.

European Role in Nuclear Disarmament

Europe hosts three of the five official nuclear weapons states (if one includes Russia). In addition to this, NATO countries rely on the protection of US nuclear weapons and still five NATO countries host American B61 nuclear weapons. European and NATO countries are involved in discussions over Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD), a powerful traditional irritant in the Russia-NATO relations. One ingredient in the discussion over BMD is a set of not too plausible scenarios of missile attacks (possibly by some out of area country) that are countered by antimissile systems (of dubious efficiency). Arguments like extended deterrence, the need for continued hosting of US nuclear weapons on European soil, the need of upgrading nuclear arsenals, and the possible deployment of BMD technologies all work in the opposite direction of decreasing the salience of nuclear weapons. Similarly, the argument that the so-called tactical nuclear weapons are a valuable asset in countervailing conventional inferiority works against reducing the salience of nuclear weapons. This last argument was traditionally NATO’s Cold War argument, when faced with conventional superiority of the now defunct Warsaw Pact. It has now become a Russian argument *vis a vis* the conventional superiority of post-Cold War NATO.

Seen from outside Europe, the undeniable message is that Europe still relies significantly on nuclear weapons for its own protection while at the same time telling others that they should not acquire nuclear weapons. This traditional “do as I say not as I do” message is bound to generate very little sympathy and ultimately it is ineffective. It can only be effective if paired with some kind of robust arm-twisting against possible proliferators. This is a weak position indeed, and very short-sighted.

As we learn from the ELN and others the message from Europe about nuclear disarmament can be different. Promoting vigorous European contributions to nuclear disarmament is not only relevant *per se*, or for the security and stability of Europe, but also for the broader positive effects that these contributions may have on the outside world, particularly on those countries that feel that a nuclear capability may be required sooner or later to protect themselves.

Europe and Conflict Resolution

Europe at different levels and in different situations is involved in curbing armed conflicts and in trying to bring about peaceful solutions. Some of these conflicts have more general repercussions that

go beyond the particular region. Pugwash is engaged deeply in understanding these dynamics and in exploring differing threat perceptions and alternate roads to promote regional stability and security in areas where nuclear risks are present. These conflicts are either a) located in regions where nuclear weapons are present, b) located very close to such regions, or c) involve nuclear weapons states in some way.

Nuclear Stability in Critical Areas (the Case of South Asia)

The increase of the number of the de-facto nuclear weapons states has created new situations where it is essential to maintain the equilibrium between nuclear-armed countries other than Russia and the US. A regional war, conducted with the use of nuclear weapons would kill millions, create an unprecedented global catastrophe (even from the environmental point of view), render uninhabitable large regions, and break a taboo about the use of nuclear weapons with severe consequences at the global level.

One of the most relevant cases to keep under observation is the case of South Asia where there is a long list of grievances and unresolved issues between India and Pakistan that has already stimulated a few wars in the past. The already significant trust deficit in the region has been made worse even recently, by (cross border) terrorist activities. By looking at the aftereffects of the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack one cannot avoid asking the question what will happen if another terrorist attack of that sort will happen. The (quote and unquote) model of September 11 has shown that terrorist acts can really intensify antagonisms and trigger conflicts. This has introduced a relatively new dimension in the area of conflict generation and hence of conflict prevention.

It is important to discuss risks and prevention of conflict and terrorist attacks between the two countries. There are solid proposals for Indo-Pakistani joint cooperation in terms of legal/intelligence/governmental institutions. Facilitating communications across the border is urgent, including by easing restrictions on television, telephone, and social media. People to people contacts must be facilitated through relaxed visa regimes and other measures (including across the Line of Control in Kashmir). Inter-parliamentary cooperation is a key goal. Through these and other means, diminishing antagonisms and enhancing reciprocal understanding can create an environment where it is possible to further discuss specifically the issues related to nuclear weapons and nuclear stability in the subcontinent. Pugwash, like other non governmental organizations, is contributing to these dialogues, and seeks to facilitate a counter narrative to conflict between the two countries.

The Iranian Nuclear File

Iran, as opposed to others Middle Eastern and neighboring countries, is a member of a large number of arms control treaties. And yet, to a large extent the pressures of the external world have succeeded in transforming the nuclear issue into an issue of symbolic national importance for Iran, where nationalism comes first and rational considerations about the utility and convenience of nuclear energy come a distant second. Increased sanctions and pressures have proven to be largely irrelevant in affecting the Iran nuclear program, but have created space in the international debate for considerations about a possible military action against nuclear plants in Iran. Any such military action may trigger a chain reaction difficult to forecast. At the minimum, it may induce Iran to withdraw from the NPT with uncertain and dangerous consequences for the stability of the NPT itself.

Pugwash is working and will keep working on the Iranian nuclear file, with the goal of promoting an agreement to put to rest the Iranian nuclear controversy. In principle, any such agreement should imply no further discrimination on the right of Iran or any other country to conduct civilian nuclear activities (beyond what is already embedded in the NPT), full international monitoring of Iranian nuclear activities by the IAEA or other appropriate international organizations, and international cooperation in the field of nuclear energy, including the internationalization of nuclear fuel fabrication. A constructive climate of international cooperation also would be the most conducive environment in which to assess objectively the feasibility, safety, and the economic convenience of

civilian nuclear programs that are rightly under serious scrutiny after Fukushima.

WMD and Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East

The Middle East is a particularly critical region for nuclear weapons and other WMDs. While the recent 2010 NPT Review Conference approved the plan for a conference in 2012 to discuss the creation of a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East, the proposal for a WMD and NW Free Zone in the Middle East goes back a long way (at least to 1974). The establishment of such a zone was a key issue discussed in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Even if the effective definition and implementation of such a zone may be some time away, still it will be important to make progress in the right direction.

The facilitator and host country must be decided as a matter of urgency. Definition of the scope, membership, and the general framework of such a zone are critical. For regional progress, it also will be important to demonstrate progress as far as the membership of all the relevant arms control treaties (NPT, Chemical Weapons Convention, Biological Weapons Convention, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, agreements with the IAEA, missile control regimes, etc). It will be important to deemphasize in all possible ways the salience of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Ideas in this respect go from no use or no first use agreements, to control of fissile materials production for military purposes (FMCT) to various possible unilateral and collectively agreed steps. Embedding these discussions in a more general approach, where issues of regional stability and security will be considered, can be useful and may be necessary, provided that the regional security discussions and the process of eliminating WMDs and working towards the WMDFZ are seen as mutually reinforcing and not as one being the prerequisite for the other. Pugwash is very active in supporting any possible progress in the elimination of WMDs and NWs from the Middle East, as in all parts of the world.

Middle East Changes

Many things have changed, and quite dramatically so, in the Middle East. Revolts against dictators and in support of basic democratic freedom have spread with variable results. Even in the most promising situations, time will tell how much the changes that have been called for by the people will stabilize and will in fact represent a real transformation of the structure of the society. European and Western attitudes towards the democratization process of the Middle Eastern societies have been mixed and some mixed messages have been delivered. European actions ranged from military intervention (against Gaddafi) to ignoring the protesters (Bahrain and to a certain extent Yemen) to criticism of the dictatorship with no effective action (Syria). The changes in Egypt have been supported by the West and the centrality of Egypt in the region will surely draw the world's attention to the political evolution of the country as well as to the management of the country itself from the economic point of view.

But there is another smaller Middle Eastern country where the issues of democracy and freedom have been on the world agenda for a long time, where Europe has been involved with massive economic aid, and political attention. This is Palestine. The solution of the problems of Palestine is of vital importance for the image of the West and of Europe in the Middle East and more generally in the Muslim world. It is apparent that occupation for Palestinians plays the same role of the "undemocratic regimes" that the new Arab spring has attempted to eliminate. The region composed of by Israel and Palestine with its conflicts has drawn much attention and money from the West, still the situation there represents, from many viewpoints, the opposite of what we see in the West as model for good governance. Leaving for a moment aside the history of the region and the complexity of such history, one can easily see that in the status quo situation there are strong, at times absolute, limitations to the freedom of movement for people and for business. Gaza has been an enormous jail for 1.5 million inhabitants up to very recently. People are discriminated on the basis of ethnicity and of religious affiliation. Democracy in the occupied territories is of limited value as the occupying forces are able to impose almost whatever they want to the inhabitants of the occupied territories. Still at times even this limited exercise of democracy in Palestine is put under constraints. When in 2006 Hamas won the

elections the results of these elections have not been recognized by Israel and the entire West and the new Government and the new Parliament has not been able to meet once in full. Violence is pervasive, with rocket attacks and bombings (all hitting civilian population). Properties (houses etc.) are taken away from people showing no respect for private property. Political exponents are routinely put in jail by their opponents. One of every five Palestinians has been in an Israeli jail, Palestinians of different political affiliation have been put in jail by the opposite factions, the Israeli soldier Shalit is in some tunnel since 5 years taken by Hamas. Europe and the west launched many political initiatives claiming to help solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Money has been spent in large quantities with the net result of keeping the conflict going on and the situation in Palestine still represents the most severe wound in the Muslim vs. the West divide.

Afghanistan

Another situation Europe has committed itself to economically and militarily is the situation in Afghanistan. We are looking at ten years of war with dubious, if any, results. There is a general sense of fatigue in all the countries that have sent military forces to Afghanistan. Life for ordinary Afghans is as difficult as it has ever been: struggling between checkpoints, hitting once in a while some mine-field along the road, being targeted when they go to markets, to hospitals, to mosques, or being the so-called “collateral damage” from drone attacks. Lots of economic aid has been funneled into Afghanistan, some of it is bound to return back to the donor countries one way or the other. Can the other part of this economic aid (the one that is staying in Afghanistan) play a role in the creation of a relatively stable economic development? One thing is certain: no stable (and *healthy*) economic development can safely happen in a war situation.

The main question is how to bring about peace in Afghanistan? Talking to Talibans is considered necessary by many, if not most. Details need to be decided as to how to conduct such talks, who to involve, and where the talks should be held. It is important to generate space for discussions among Afghans on the structure of the society that should come out from the reconciliation process and to explore how foreign forces should be involved (if at all) in these talks. The reconciliation process should involve in some way the neighboring countries, some—such as Pakistan—possibly may be able to be of more help than others.

Fostering Dialogue and Communications Across All Divides as a Contribution to Conflict Resolution

This report has been prepared for the 59th Pugwash Conference, which took place in Berlin on 1-4 July 2011. It highlights some of the main themes to which Pugwash has dedicated its activities. As mentioned earlier, promoting communication and dialogue across the various divides is central to Pugwash’s work. Most of our work is organized around building relations, and to the extent possible, some trust among people reflecting different camps. What we do is to organize Track II and the so-called Track one-and-a-half meetings. But putting people together at times becomes an impossible enterprise. It is remarkable how much in the era of the Internet and supposedly global worldwide communications (and Skype), it is still hard to get people across borders, to provide them with visas, etc. The US is, for this reason, practically off limits to a variety of nationals coming from the Middle East and not only and hence is also off limits for many different types of meetings. Israeli citizens are forbidden to visit most countries of the Middle East and, in some cases, this restriction applies also to non-Israelis who have visited Israel. International organizations have serious difficulties in organizing meetings in India when Pakistanis are invited. And the list could go on.

Also one has to face the fact even if the visa problems are overcome and some “neutral” country is chosen to host the venue for a meeting, still it may happen that many people have problems in getting together. For instance Iranian nationals do not sit easily with Israelis; if Syrians sit together in meetings with Israeli officials they are committing a crime that, according to some, deserves the death penalty. Some Palestinians, even if they have visa, cannot get out of the West Bank since either they are forbidden to do so or they will be not allowed to come back by Israeli border guards.

For Pugwash activities it has always been and continues to be very important to have meetings where there is no discrimination based on nationality or political/religious affiliation. Europe could provide a good setting for this, but unfortunately things are getting worse even here. We learned with dismay that the EU has decided recently to forbid officials of EU countries to participate to official meeting organized in Iran. The list of people from Iran who are forbidden to travel is also growing, making as usual things worse. We know that members of Hamas are not welcome in the EU. For the nationals of many critical countries, obtaining visa takes long time and an uncertain and lengthy (and at times humiliating) procedure. This happens even if the people in question are invited to high-level meetings. This attitude of closing up and denying *de facto* opportunities for people of even radical different viewpoint to meet, is a short-sighted attitude that is forcing Europe to loose ground in the area of conflict resolution.

Meeting in the wake of Fukushima, it is clear that the nuclear dangers confronting our society remain complex, and in fact they respect no national borders. The nexus of the challenges we face on a global scale, where climate change and increasing energy demands meet head-on questions over proliferation risks and regional stability, demands serious and sustained international dialogue. Pugwash remains committed to ensuring a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, to creating dialogue across divides to promote greater stability in areas of nuclear risk, and to seeking non-military solutions to conflict.

www.pugwash.org