

H.E. President Abdullah Gül's Address at the Pugwash Conference

01.11.2013

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address this distinguished audience on the occasion of the 60th Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs which is being held in Istanbul with the theme entitled "Dialogue, Disarmament, Regional and Global Security"

I welcome you our esteemed guests coming from the four corners of the world and I would like to extend my thanks to the Pugwash Organizing Committee for choosing Istanbul for this important occasion.

I'm offering my congratulations to the Center for Strategic Research of the Turkish Foreign Ministry on its valuable efforts to host this event.

Granted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 for its efforts toward the limitation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) including nuclear arms, the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs is serving as a significant platform about disarmament.

Turkey is located at the heart of the Afro-Eurasian axis, which is a critical geography in terms of disarmament and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Moreover, Turkey is a country that is actively contributing to the control of weapons, disarmament and nonproliferation of WMDs, and is party to all of the basic international documents and export control regulations in this area. Within this context, I find it meaningful that our country is hosting the 60th Pugwash Conference this year.

Among us are scientists, politicians and statesmen from various areas of specialization and experience as well as opinion leaders, each of whom is specialized in their field of interest.

I wholeheartedly believe that this diversity among our participants will help reach the production of the common mind, original analyses and results-oriented evaluations about the regional and international issues which constitute the theme of the conference today.

Distinguished Guests,

Humankind, through giant steps in science and technology, entered the 20th century with great hopes and expectations.

Unfortunately, the first half of last century witnessed the bloodiest wars in human history. All of the optimistic expectations largely failed due to the two world wars which claimed the lives of millions of people.

With these bitter experiences and tragedies that humanity went through between 1914 and 1945, a new global political, economic and security architecture was built in the second half of the 20th century. The objective was that the same agonies and crises would not recur.

All of the ideals and goals manifested in the UN Charter were indeed the result of an understanding of the need to work together for a stable world order.

Success was achieved in this regard to some extent. After all, large scale wars and clashes were not seen during the second half of the 20th century. Further, the number of clashes between states even decreased. The new global architecture built on the basis of cooperation and global partnership played an important role in this, of course.

However, the “balance of terror” emerging in the shadow of nuclear weapons during the Cold War created one of the most tense eras of the international community.

And in 1955, when the parameters of this balance of terror were just being formed, 8 scientists including such geniuses as Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell issued a manifesto.

They aimed to draw attention to the fact at a very early stage that nuclear weapons pose a great threat to humanity.

This notice, known as the “Russell-Einstein Manifesto” paved the way for a series of conferences in 1957 in the small town of Pugwash, Canada.

“The Pugwash Conferences”, which has become one of the world’s leading platforms in disarmament and which has brought us together today, is the outcome of such foresight.

Distinguished Guests,

My generation was the children of the 20th century, which witnessed great developments but huge destructions and sorrows.

We grew up listening to our grandparents tell us of tragedies experienced in World War 1.

I was born in the atmosphere of the Cold War and into the new world order established right after World War 2.

I was a student in the years when the Cold War reached its peak and I was new in politics when the Cold War ended.

We may not have experienced a clash at a world war scale during that period- as I also witnessed- but we fully felt the pressures created by the balance of terror and we were well aware of the heavy costs of the WMDs in human and material terms.

After all, the destructive influences of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on civilians left very deep traces in our memories. Therefore, since the years when we were young, we have championed the elimination of these weapons.

The first resolution the UN General Assembly adopted on January 24, 1946, was toward the establishment of a commission for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the ideological polarization and armament race did not allow the attainment of this goal.

With the end of the bipolar world order, expectations and hopes grew high about the elimination of WMDs.

With the argument that there was no need for nuclear weapons and WMDs, a series of conferences were held and many articles were published

A rather optimistic atmosphere emerged regarding the elimination of ballistic nuclear weapons with the START-1 and START-2 and toward nonproliferation of such weapons with the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

Nonetheless, these affirmative expectations have not been realized unfortunately. We have failed to create a new global security architecture that excludes WMDs.

Many frozen conflicts of the Cold War as well as the issue of WMDs are still on the list of problems of our globalized world.

Unfortunately, WMDs including nuclear weapons still take up an important place in security doctrines.

Besides, concerns about the proliferation of WMDs are gradually increasing. We are faced with the threat of access to these weapons by countries with a high security risk and by non-state actors .

The proliferation of WMDs and internal clashes are intertwined now and this poses the gravest risk toward international peace and security.

Distinguished Guests,

When we approach this issue in terms of states, it can be realized that the basic factor which leads to the ownership of WMDs is the feeling of insecurity.

In this environment of new strategic threat where predictability is gradually decreasing, some countries appeal to nuclear weapons. It is estimated that in a geopolitical climate where the countries' capacities to direct development by themselves are largely limited, the use of such weapons will provide an advantage in international and regional balances.

The basic issue regarding chemical, biological and radiological weapons is that of compensating the inequality in access to modern weapons technologies. Some countries, believing that they won't be able to compete in terms of high-tech expensive war equipment, appeal to such weapons which are cheaper and easier to access.

At this point, I would like to draw your attention to a contradiction. On the one hand, ownership of sophisticated deadly weapons is seen as legitimate; on the other hand, it is regarded as not legitimate for some countries to have chemical, biological and radiological weapons which are cheaper and easier to access. This is a contradiction in itself.

It is therefore a must that we approach with courage the issue of WMDs including nuclear weapons and that we altogether get rid of this predicament. We cannot get rid of this issue by enforcing different criteria in practice for strong and weak countries.

It must be admitted first that all estimations and evaluations which in a way legitimize WMDs are all wrong and incomplete.

Ownership of WMDs has nothing to do with security and international law.

The experiences that humanity had last century demonstrated to us all that having WMDs did not provide security for any country, but on the contrary, it entailed further instabilities and problems.

These bitter experiences of the past and the existence of regimes which would not avoid wielding such weapons should be an indication for us all as to what huge costs this issue could cause in human terms.

Therefore, if we are to leave a more secure, more peaceful, more stable and more prosperous future to the next generations, we must resolutely protect the perspective of a world free from WMDs.

This should not be regarded as running after a dream. Eliminating such a risk concerning all of us is a responsibility falling on our shoulders, for future generations and all of humanity.

Dear Guests,

We must remember that controlling and diminishing WMDs permanently can be possible only through a new understanding of countries in their perceptions of threat.

It would not be realistic to expect a solution to such a global issue through unilateral steps, bilateral agreements or efforts of like-minded states.

We are going through an era in which regionalizing tendencies are gradually increasing. Problems now are addressed by regional actors first and permanent solutions to these problems are sought at the regional level first as well.

This very development indicates that the works toward the ultimate elimination of WMDs can be achieved through the establishment of security architectures at the regional level.

Turkey is against all sorts of WMDs in our geography and supports the destruction of the existing ones.

We believe that having such weapons and efforts to develop new ones will lead to a race in the region, thus posing a threat to international peace and security.

Because when any one of the regional countries succeeds in having WMDs, others cut down on their welfare, make every effort day and night to obtain these weapons.

In short, the existence of WMDs leads to a “security dilemma” in the strongest way, and the insecurity whirlpool, which can emerge afterwards, brings about the strongest culminations.

We believe that showing tolerance to de facto ownership of WMDs of some countries in the Middle East, which is going through a transformation process, entails an additional burden to the region which is already struggling against many problems.

The use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, in Halabja in 1988, and in a region near Damascus last August evidently demonstrate the graveness and urgency of the problem of WMDs in the Middle

East.

In this regard, I have long reiterated the need for a new OSCE-like security architecture which will provide for stripping the Middle East of WMDs including nuclear weapons.

I am of the opinion that there is the necessary conventional foundation in terms of international law to establish a regional order.

Within this context, Resolution 687 of the UN Security Council, regarding Iraq, serves as the necessary legal foundation. Besides, Resolution 2118 of the UN Security Council regarding Syria which, was adopted in September this year should be regarded as a resolution that strengthens this legal foundation.

I hope that this idea, which was supported by US President Obama at the 2010 NPT Review Conference held in New York, urges the other big actors toward the elimination of all the WMDs in the Middle East.

Turkey still maintains the encouragement and suggestions toward the organization of the conference, which was supposed to be held in Helsinki in 2012, about the establishment of a region in the Middle East free from WMDs.

We also lend our support to the process launched with the UNSC's Resolution 2118 on the elimination of the chemical weapons stockpile of Syria.

We hope this process launched in Syria serves as the first step toward a regional security architecture that will help in the elimination of all the WMDs in the Middle East.

WMDs, which are one of the most important reasons for the existing insecurity in the Middle East, are not considered independently of the threat perceptions of the regional countries and of the Arab-Israel Conflict, which is the fundamental problem of the region.

Therefore, it is a necessity for us to approach all of the security issues and threat perceptions with an integrative understanding.

Hence, we should courageously address both issues.

A comprehensive peace process to be launched as part of the Arab Peace Plan will largely eliminate the security stalemate of some countries which want to assure their future through nuclear weapons.

In this vein, we expect all the countries in the region to be party to all of the international regulations as to nonproliferation of WMDs. The membership of Iraq, Lebanon and Syria in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is an important step taken in the right direction.

Similarly, we hope that the talks carried out with the U.S. initiative between Israel and Palestine will in the shortest time help direct negotiations to start.

We believe that the current conditions are convenient for the efforts to find a resolution of Iran's nuclear program through dialogue.

Within this context, the recent dialogue between the U.S. administration and Iran is an affirmative development

we have long wished to see. I shared with the whole world my pleasure at the telephone conversation between Presidents Obama and Rouhani in September.

I also hope that the U.S.-Iranian dialogue creates a suitable climate for the solution of all the Middle East's regional problems as well including the resolution of Iran's nuclear program through dialogue.

I believe that the presence of Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif among us today is a demonstration of this new climate of dialogue.

Dear Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although it is 60 years since the "Russell-Einstein Manifesto" was issued in 1955, WMDs still pose grave threats to world peace, stability and security.

The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime proved that we have every right to be concerned about the existence of WMDs in the Middle East.

We dread to think of the possibility for terrorists and other radical groups to have these weapons.

I would like to reiterate once again the cruciality that we resolutely continue our efforts toward the resolution of this deep-rooted global issue.

I would like to refer to the following appeal which is in the "Russell-Einstein Manifesto" which lights our efforts in this direction: "We appeal as human beings to human beings: Remember your humanity, and forget the rest".

Thank you.