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Japan and Nuclear Disarmament in the 21st Century: The Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

Remarks by Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr.
President, Lawyers Alliance for World Security
Hiroshima Peace Institute
Hiroshima, September 18, 1999

It is always a great pleasure for me to visit this great nation and this beautiful city. I would like to start by thanking the Hiroshima Peace Institute for organizing this important symposium, along with all the other important work that the Institute does, and by saying how honored I am to be part of such an impressive panel. Our topic today is and will continue to be among the most important problems facing mankind, the question of nuclear weapons. While it has been fifty-four years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by nuclear weapons, developments in South Asia, for example, during the last eighteen months stand as stark warning that similar devastation could happen again. If we are to make the new century safer and more stable than the last, sincere efforts must be made to bolster the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime and thereby prevent the spread of and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, a fact long recognized by Japan.

It is for this reason that I have always admired Japanese leadership of efforts to prevent history from repeating itself. As the only nation to experience the devastation of nuclear war, Japan has a unique sensitivity to the dangers

brought by the spread of nuclear weapons and has emerged as the moral leader of international efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. Japan has historically been at the forefront of these efforts, evidenced by its annual submission of a UN General Assembly resolution on nuclear disarmament, its bilateral and multilateral efforts to promote indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, the vital role it played in negotiating the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the fact that it was the first major state to ratify the CTBT in July 1997.

The initiation of the Tokyo Forum for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament is the latest demonstration of this leadership. Its report, issued in July, is the most noteworthy development in nuclear disarmament this year, and takes its place alongside the 1997 Canberra Commission report and the 1997 U.S. National Academy of Sciences study on the future of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. In assembling a group of highly respected disarmament experts to present a comprehensive list of recommendations to the international community on how to proceed to preserve the NPT regime and move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons in the next century, the Tokyo Forum has made a significant contribution to world peace and security for the new millennium. It will undoubtedly have a significant effect on the nuclear disarmament process. The government of Japan and the Forum participants should be proud of this contribution, and I congratulate them for it.

The Forum concludes, correctly I believe, that the "world faces a choice between the assured dangers of proliferation or the challenges of nuclear disarmament." By concluding the NPT in 1968, as well as making it permanent in 1995, the world ostensibly chose the latter, but developments over the years, including in recent months, and continuing nuclear-weapon state inability to negotiate further reductions in nuclear arsenals seem to be pushing the international community toward the former. Today, 104 days before the new century, several important steps

need to be taken if the world is to move back onto the right track. The nuclear-weapon states should pursue policies that reduce the political value of nuclear weapons, the START process should be reinvigorated with a near-term objective of negotiating levels that would permit five-power negotiations to begin, and non-nuclear-weapon states should work with the nuclear-weapon states to promote multilateral initiatives that would bolster the NPT regime.

Reducing the Political Value of Nuclear Weapons

The Tokyo Forum report makes clear, and I firmly believe, that the NPT is and must remain the cornerstone of international security. The Treaty represents a bargain between 181 non-nuclear-weapon states which have committed to never acquire nuclear weapons and five nuclear-weapon states which agreed in Article VI to eventually eliminate their nuclear arsenals. While this bargain was reaffirmed in the 1995 Statement of Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament document, an integral part of the indefinite extension of the Treaty, recent lack of progress in nuclear arms reductions and the continued high perceived political value of nuclear weapons threaten to undermine the NPT regime and erode the Treaty. Japan is in a unique position to prevent this by contributing to a reaffirmation of the core bargain of the Treaty. Japan has for years been a leader of non-nuclear-weapon states because it has resisted the impetus to acquire nuclear weapons despite possessing the technological capacity to do so and despite inhabiting a region that includes two nuclear-weapon states, the world's most unpredictable and seemingly antagonistic regime, and a patchwork of bilateral disputes, many of which could easily escalate to full-scale conflict. Japanese restraint in the face of these and other security challenges sets a precedent for non-nuclear-weapon states the world over.

Japan can similarly lead nuclear-weapon states to adopt policies that would significantly decrease the political value of nuclear weapons and represent prudent steps toward fulfilling their NPT commitments. Specifically, Japan should urge the nuclear-weapon states to declare that they would under no circumstances be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict. Adoption of such a policy, usually referred to as a "no first use" policy, would reduce the political value of nuclear weapons by strictly limiting their role and thereby making them less desirable to potential proliferators.

With the exception of China which adopted a no first use policy immediately after its first nuclear weapon test, current nuclear weapon state policies regarding the use of nuclear weapons are damaging to the NPT regime because they are potentially inconsistent with NPT-related commitments made to non-nuclear-weapon states as early as 1978. At the first UN Special Conference on Disarmament in that year, then-U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance articulated the first official U.S. pledge of non-use of nuclear weapons against NPT non-nuclear-weapon states (referred to as a negative security assurance). The United Kingdom and the Soviet Union made similar pledges. During negotiations to extend the NPT in1995, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 984, which acknowledged formal commitments made by the nuclear-weapon states to refrain from using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT unless such a state were to attack in alliance with another nuclear-weapon state. Additionally, in agreeing to the appropriate protocols of three nuclear weapons free zone agreements, the nuclear-weapon states have pledged not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the more than 110 non-nuclear-weapon states that are members of such regimes. These security commitments have been recognized by the World Court as legally binding and are essential to maintaining non-nuclear-weapon state confidence in the NPT regime.

It is important to note that these commitments do not include exceptions that would allow the use of nuclear weapons in response to an attack with chemical and/or biological weapons. The nuclear-weapon states should agree to a no first use policy. This would emphasize their commitments to the negative security assurances and would send a firm message to would-be proliferators that the acquisition of nuclear weapons do not enhance the security or greatness of a state. It is clearly in the interest of Japan and the entire world community to assure that the political value of nuclear weapons is diminished to the greatest extent possible, and that the potential for the proliferation and use of these weapons be minimized. The Tokyo Forum notes that "nuclear tests by India and Pakistan have shown that not all countries share the view that the usefulness of nuclear weapons is declining." Japanese leadership in encouraging the adoption of no first use policies along with its continuing restraint in the face of regional tensions and dangers would be important in reversing this trend. The Tokyo Forum is correct in its assessment that until they are abolished the only function of nuclear weapons is to deter the use of other nuclear weapons.

Multilateral Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Structures

While the nuclear-weapon states are clearly the most important actors, states such as Japan are unique in their ability to influence international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and are becoming more important as non-proliferation becomes an increasingly multilateral exercise. As the Tokyo Forum Report notes, "nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are not the preserve of the nuclear-weapon states." Last year at the United Nations, for example, all but one non-nuclear-weapon state member of NATO abstained on a General Assembly resolution sponsored by Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden calling for a new international agenda to achieve a nuclear weapons free

world. Similarly, due largely to the efforts of Canada and Germany, NATO agreed at its April Summit meeting to conduct a review of its nuclear doctrine that could result in the consideration by the Alliance of the adoption of a no first use policy. Efforts such as these are ways in which determined non-nuclear-weapon states can work toward reducing the political value of nuclear weapons.

The Tokyo Forum Report recommends several additional ways in which non-nuclear weapon states can bolster the non-proliferation regime by promoting multilateral structures intended to curb the spread of nuclear weapons or detect violations of the norm against acquiring them. For example, the report addresses the importance of expeditious CTBT entry into force, which requires ratification by the forty-four states identified in the Treaty as members of the Conference on Disarmament that possess nuclear reactor technology. Of these forty-four states, thirty-six are non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT. Only twenty-one of these required states, and only nineteen of the thirty-six required non-nuclear-weapon states, have ratified the Treaty. NPT non-nuclear-weapon states can urge the United States, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and Israel to sign and ratify the Treaty and isolate them by their example. It would be more difficult for the U.S. Senate, for example, to continue to avoid hearings if thirty-eight out of the forty-four required states, including the United Kingdom and France which already have done so, have ratified the Treaty and even more difficult if a preponderance of the 147 non-nuclear-weapon states that have signed the Treaty ratify it. At the very least, ratification by the non-nuclear-weapon states would remove excuses for inaction.

Similarly, as the Tokyo Forum recommends, non-nuclear-weapon states can help to fortify the NPT regime by adopting improved IAEA safeguards, which would enhance the ability of the Agency to detect clandestine nuclear weapons programs, and by promoting the completion

of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. The Iraqi nuclear weapons program demonstrates that the regime cannot rely solely on trust to ensure that all of its members are in compliance. By adopting the enhanced safeguards in the IAEA Additional Protocol, non-nuclear-weapon states bolster the regime by helping to restore confidence in its effectiveness. Likewise, a treaty that irreversibly and verifiably caps the stockpiles of fissile material needed to manufacture nuclear weapons would help to reaffirm nuclear-weapon state commitment to disarmament objectives.

Non-nuclear-weapon states are increasingly capable of influencing global nuclear disarmament efforts, and Japan has truly been a leader. It is no coincidence that Japan has been instrumental in all of the efforts I've discussed and that it was of course the Japanese government that initiated the Tokyo Forum. Japan was the first country to condemn the Indian nuclear tests in May, has been a leader in fissile material cutoff negotiations, and has outspokenly promoted global disarmament objectives. It is clear to me that assuring the success of the NPT regime in the future will require continued Japanese leadership, and it is equally clear to me that Japan is ready and able to meet this challenge.

The new post-Cold War model for nuclear arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament also includes an expanding role for responsible non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In this age of reduced secrecy and enhanced access to information, NGOs can do more than before to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and sometimes can do things that governments cannot. Such organizations help break down barriers between governments by providing forums for informal exchanges between nations. They have also begun to play important roles in influencing governments to review policies regarding nuclear weapons and in promoting transparency. Finally, NGOs participate in a variety of multilateral fora, including the NPT review and extension conferences, the Conference on Disarmament, and the UN First

Committee. When I headed the U.S. campaign to indefinitely extend the NPT, our efforts benefited greatly from the work of various NGOs.

The Need for Strategic Reductions

Ultimately, however, the NPT regime will crumble unless significant progress is made in drastically reducing nuclear arsenals. This was a central commitment in the 1995 Statement of Principles and Objectives. Recent developments, including the discussions last month in Moscow between U.S. Under Secretary of State John Holum and Russian Ambassador Grigorii Berdennikov, indicate that there may be a possibility for START III reductions to as low as 1,500 deployed strategic warheads or even lower. I commend the call in the Tokyo Forum Report for an agreement by the United States and Russia to 1,000 deployed strategic warheads. As talks resumed yesterday in Washington, one cannot overemphasize the importance of these meetings resulting in significant reductions, especially in light of the fact that the April 2000 NPT review is near and the nuclear-weapon states have shown little progress toward fulfilling their disarmament commitments since the Treaty's indefinite extension. Agreement to reductions to levels such as those discussed in Moscow would signal U.S. and Russian commitment to these obligations, to a degree restoring confidence in non-nuclear-weapon states in the process.

Strategic reductions, coupled with the development of an extensive and intrusive transparency and inspection regime on warheads, fissile material and ballistic missiles, would lay the groundwork for limits on tactical nuclear weapons as well, which could result in a U.S.-Russian agreement to a level of 1,000 total warheads as a follow on agreement. Then the next step would be to begin five-power negotiations aimed at reaching residual levels of nuclear weapons in the low hundreds, for example 300, for the United States and Russia each, even

lower, perhaps 50, for China, France and the United Kingdom, and zero for India, Pakistan, and Israel, but with their fissile material kept on their territory under IAEA safeguards so as to permit reconstitution should the agreement break down. As an essential part of this, the non-nuclear weapon states would all pledge again their non-nuclear weapon status and agree to joint action against any state that should violate this obligation. This would be the end point until the world changes sufficiently to allow negotiation of a complete prohibition on nuclear arms.

If successful, this process would represent the most dramatic and important development regarding implementation of Article VI ever accomplished and would enormously strengthen the NPT regime. The Tokyo Forum correctly concludes that, absent significant reductions in existing nuclear arsenals, nuclear non-proliferation efforts are unlikely to succeed. The cost of failure is steep; a wrecked NPT and a world inhabited not by five or eight states with nuclear weapons, but by forty to sixty such states. Drastically reducing the number of nuclear weapons in the world and strictly limiting their role solely to deterring their use by others, coupled with practical steps by non-nuclear-weapon states to bolster the non-proliferation regime, is the best path toward security and stability in the next century.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for your attention.