

Interview

Ambassador Abdallah Baali on the 2000 NPT Review Conference

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BACKGROUND

The Sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)—the first important multilateral arms control forum of the new millennium—was held at United Nations headquarters from April 24 through May 19, 2000, under the presidency of Ambassador Abdallah Baali (Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations). During the five years since the historic 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference (NPTREC), expectations had been drastically lowered regarding the prospects for a successful 2000 review of the operation and implementation of the treaty. Many factors had combined to produce glacially slow progress in nuclear disarmament. Non-nuclear weapon states observed with consternation the continuing deadlock at the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the US Senate, the momentum building behind US national missile defense (NMD) plans, the re-rationalization of nuclear weapons in the doctrines of Russia and the United States, and the less-than-satisfactory outcomes of the three sessions of the NPT Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) during 1997-1999. As a result, there was an air of frustration regarding the fulfillment of promises made in 1995 to secure indefinite extension of the NPT.

On November 1, 1999, South Africa, which had been slated to preside over the 2000 conference, unexpectedly

resigned from that responsibility, leaving a last-minute void in the preparations for the review conference. Following nomination by the African states and endorsement by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), on December 8, 1999, the PrepCom met in a brief “resumed session” and accepted the nomination of Ambassador Abdallah Baali as the provisional president of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. His long experience in multilateral and UN diplomacy served him well, and while allowing great flexibility to the chairs of the three main committees and the two subsidiary bodies, he continued to exercise firm guidance moderated by unflinching optimism and a high degree of transparency. In his efforts, he was assisted by the cooperation of many states, including the five nuclear weapon states (NWS)—from whom he had secured, in advance, commitments not to undermine the conference over differences on nuclear disarmament.

Ambassador Baali’s leadership helped produce a historic result. On May 20, 2000, delegates from 157 countries agreed by consensus on a Final Document establishing “practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts” to achieve further progress in nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In the 30-year history of the NPT, this was the first time that NPT states had agreed to a fully negotiated Final Document by consensus. The NPT review conferences in 1975 and 1985 had also agreed to final documents, but these were not fully negotiated—the

1975 document was drafted by the conference president, while the 1985 document achieved “consensus” only by reflecting differences in the views of states on nuclear disarmament. And the NPTREC agreed without a vote to a package of decisions and a resolution; but it failed to agree on a review of the treaty’s implementation during 1990-1995.

Some important elements in the 150-plus paragraph Final Declaration included an unequivocal undertaking by the NWS to nuclear disarmament; a moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions pending the entry into force of the CTBT; the necessity of negotiations in the CD on a fissile material cut-off treaty; the necessity of establishing in the CD an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament; increased transparency by the NWS with regard to their nuclear weapons capabilities; further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons; rejection of NWS status or any special status whatsoever for India and Pakistan; non-contravention and implementation of the measures set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1172 (1998) addressed to India and Pakistan; reaffirmation of the fundamental importance of full compliance with the provisions of the treaty and its relevant safeguards agreements; full compliance with NPT obligations by North Korea and Iraq; and improving the effectiveness of the strengthened review process. On regional issues, for the first time in the history of the NPT, there was a clear and unambiguous call regarding the importance of Israel’s accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

In preparation for the 2000 Review Conference, Ambassador Baali engaged in a wide range of consultations with governments as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to hear differing perspectives and to assist him in his preparations. In this context, he visited the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) at the end of January 2000 and also took part in a special meeting organized in Washington, DC, in March. Following the end of the conference, Ambassador Baali again visited MIIS, where he was interviewed on July 13, 2000 by Tariq Rauf. Tariq Rauf is the director of the International Organizations and Nonproliferation Program at MIIS and has served as an advisor with Canada’s delegation to NPT review conferences since 1990.

PREPARATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Between December 1999 and April 2000, i.e., when your candidacy for president was provisionally approved and the start of the conference, what preparations and consultations did you engage in? What was the result of these preparations and consultations?

Since my experience relates to multilateral and bilateral diplomacy in all its aspects and given my present position as the Permanent Representative of Algeria at the United Nations in New York, when I accepted the difficult challenge of the presidency, I was aware of both the complexity and delicacy of many of the principal issues facing the review conference. I also had experience as vice-chair of the CTBT PrepCom, chairing meetings in New York in 1996, which had exposed me to some of the intricacies of the controversy over nuclear disarmament. In fact, shortly after this experience some one had suggested that I consider the presidency of the next NPT review conference—a notion that I dismissed at that time because of the complexity of the conference and because I had no interest whatsoever in dealing with nuclear issues. It is ironic therefore that in the end, I did occupy the position of presiding at the 2000 Conference, four years after that suggestion had been made.

In advancing my preparations and to improve my understanding of the key issues at stake, I read a wide range of sources on nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation, as well as the histories and proceedings of the previous NPT review conferences. It was my goal to clearly identify all potential problems and to seek possible or acceptable solutions, in advance. As you well know, the international environment prior to the conference was very negative and its prospects for a successful outcome looked bleak. For example, the CTBT ratification had been rejected by the US Senate in October 1999, the CD remained deadlocked, US NMD plans risked derailing the strategic nuclear arms reduction process, the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan had dealt a very serious blow to the global nuclear nonproliferation regime, and dangers continued to be posed by the existence of 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world (which are capable of obliterating, many times over, everything that humankind has accomplished since it first appeared on Earth).

Coming from an Arab country, I was only too aware of the determination of the Arab group of NPT countries to secure a clear mention of Israel with respect to its joining the treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state (NNWS). Finally, the NNWS had made clear their high expectations regarding the commitment to nuclear disarmament by the NWS.

However, the situation was not entirely gray. Some progress had been made and there were some positive developments in the nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation fields. I did not want to yield to pessimism and wanted to build upon the few positive developments that had taken place, to use them as a basis for a starting point in our common quest of securing a world free of nuclear weapons. For example, the number of NPT states parties had increased to 187, nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties had been established in Southeast Asia and in Africa, IAEA safeguards had been strengthened, and the CTBT had been ratified at that time by two of the NWS.

It was in this context that I began my consultations with the NWS and major NNWS. I went to Washington, London, Moscow, Beijing, Paris, Vienna, and Geneva for consultations—in all some 45 countries were consulted. I had decided that in my consultations, I would clearly communicate to my interlocutors that the president of the conference was to be in charge and would provide the necessary leadership and direction. I also cautioned against overly high expectations given the difficult political context. My first meeting with the NWS was with the United States, on January 14. In that meeting, I clearly communicated the feelings of many of the NNWS of frustration over the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, and tried to convince the United States of the necessity of the conference to adopt further steps relating to nuclear disarmament and that this was a minimum requirement. Fortunately, the response was encouraging to the effect that it would be useful to try to agree on further steps for nuclear disarmament to complement the “principles and objectives for nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament” agreed by the 1995 NPTREC. And in my consultations in Moscow and Beijing, I was assured that concerns over US national missile defense would not be used to hold up agreement at the conference.

What were your initial expectations about the outcome of the conference? Were these expectations met, and if so, why and how were they met?

It is fair to comment that initial expectations were exceeded. Frankly speaking, no one was expecting agreement on a final document, much less of the type that was in fact agreed by consensus. Once agreement on the report of Subsidiary Body 1 was in sight, and then actually achieved, the result was to enhance confidence and to improve the overall mood at the conference for reaching consensus agreement.

The conference got a boost by giving an early start to the work of the main committees and the subsidiary bodies. To a very large extent, the two subsidiary bodies dealt with the most contentious sets of issues and in effect removed these issues from stalemating the work of the main committees.

I remained optimistic about a positive outcome to the conference as no particular state wanted to shoulder the responsibility of causing the failure of the conference, given the nature and scope of the agreements that were achieved towards the end. I was also keenly aware that the final hard compromises would only come about in the very last few hours, and as such it was important for me not to lose hope but to persevere and to maintain a measure of optimism for success.

What surprises were there with respect to expected or unexpected problem issues?

Initially, I was very concerned that the issue of national missile defense might derail the conference. But in my consultations in Moscow and Beijing, I was reassured that while the question of NMD would be raised frequently and debated intensely, it would not be pushed to the extent of breaking the conference. In fact, the issue was raised but not in a very confrontational manner, due to the fact that parallel discussions were taking place to come up with agreed language on NMD in the NWS joint statement.

What international developments prior to the conference affected its atmosphere and outcome?

Interestingly, during my visit to Moscow, I was given some hints about the possibility of the Russian Federation’s impending ratification of the CTBT and START II prior to the opening of the conference. Of course, as is the case with these types of developments, I was not told definitively but only given indications. And, in the event, Russian ratification of START II and

the CTBT in the weeks just prior to the conference sent a positive signal, and showed that given these moves by Russia, it would not prevent agreement at the conference on nuclear disarmament matters.

PROCEDURAL ISSUES

What procedural issues remained to be resolved prior to the start of the conference? How did you deal with these issues?

At the time that I accepted the presidency, a number of procedural problems remained unresolved—these included completion of the Bureau (an advisory body comprising certain major committee chairs and state representatives), finalization of background documentation, the establishment of subsidiary bodies, and NGO participation. I decided to resolve these procedural problems as early as possible. In fact, completing the Bureau turned out to be relatively easy, as I insisted on filling the chairs and vice-chairs of the main committees, and of the Drafting and Credentials Committees, by seeking nominations for the remaining positions from the three main political groups—the NAM, Western, and Eastern.

The issue of background documentation was resolved directly with the Secretariat on the basis that all documents including the Chairman's Paper (from the PrepCom) had the same status.

The establishment of subsidiary bodies was a key issue and it was surrounded by a lot of confusion and differing positions with respect to their nature, mandate, and duration. I personally did not feel that this was a major problem and, drawing upon my multilateral experience, was able to find the necessary acceptable compromise, to depoliticize the issue and to give it clear direction and focus. In fact, following consultations in Geneva at the end of February, I crafted a compromise solution regarding the establishment of subsidiary bodies based on two key points: (a) the number of meetings assigned to subsidiary bodies; and (b) their mandates. As long as the subsidiary bodies were to report to the main committees, then the subsidiary bodies had to meet within the time frame allotted to the main committees—this was a simple matter of logic. I envisioned that each of the subsidiary bodies would hold three or four meetings and that this time would be included in the time assigned to the relevant main committees. Reaching agreement on the mandate of Subsidiary Body 1, on nuclear disarmament,

ended up not being a real problem. It was understood that the subsidiary body would meet only during the life of Main Committee I, and its mandate was derived from the language of the “principles and objectives.” The United States was amenable to this proposal, and South Africa also threw in its support after making a more precise reference in the mandate to the “principles and objectives.” On the other hand, and not unexpectedly, reaching agreement on Subsidiary Body 2 (on regional issues and the Middle East) was much more complicated and difficult. As a matter of fact, bilateral consultations between Egypt and the United States had started much earlier, but agreement was not within reach until close to the opening of the conference. At a meeting organized by the Monterey Institute in Washington in March, I discussed this matter further with the United States. The question was one of balance: Egypt insisted on a clear reference to Israel, while the United States insisted on reference to non-adherence and non-compliance. No specific mention was made at the March meeting to North Korea and Iraq or to India and Pakistan; but the possibility was raised of a subsidiary body addressing India and Pakistan. Eventually, after much further consultations, a somewhat oddly worded mandate of Subsidiary Body 2 was agreed. Despite some speculation to the contrary, I alone was responsible for deciding upon both the precise formulation of the mandates and the appointment of the chairs of the two subsidiary bodies. The actual language of the mandates was drafted by the president and was not shown to anyone prior to its announcement at the conference, though the elements were known to key interested states but not the actual formulation. Just prior to the opening of the conference on April 24, the three political groups were informed about the formulations of the mandates and no one objected.

Regarding the chairs of the two subsidiary bodies, for me, the three key determining considerations were: first, competence of the individual; second, impartiality; and third, representation (political grouping). There was *no* pre-cooked agreement regarding the chairs of the subsidiary bodies; and Ambassador Clive Pearson (New Zealand) chaired Subsidiary Body 1 on practical steps for systematic progressive efforts for nuclear disarmament, and Ambassador Christopher Westdal (Canada) chaired Subsidiary Body 2 on “regional issues, including with respect to the Middle East and implementation of the 1995 Middle East resolution.”

For me, NGO participation was an important matter. The NWS were reluctant to enhance NGO access beyond that provided during the PrepCom sessions. After some initial resistance the obstacles were removed and NGOs were provided much more liberal access than at previous NPT meetings. I hope that this access continues, and can be enhanced, at future NPT meetings.

What was your thinking in front-loading the work of the conference, i.e., providing tight deadlines to the main committees and their subsidiary bodies to produce their draft reports? Was this strategy successful and why?

Well, from the very beginning, I was firm on the deadlines that were established in the program of work on the very first day. It was important to master time and not to become its victim, as at several previous NPT meetings. I was determined to properly organize the conference and to give it clear direction. My role as president was to continuously monitor the work of the main committees, as well as the subsidiary bodies, and to deal with any emerging problems firmly and on a timely basis. Thus, preventing any particularly difficult issue from spoiling the mood of the conference.

I was resolved to make the main committees and the subsidiary bodies work hard in the first three weeks and thus leave a window of five days to solve remaining difficult problems. I would recommend to a future conference president to take charge of the review conference at the very outset and to continue to exercise his authority to reach acceptable outcomes. Without such pressure, it is more difficult for multilateral meetings to reach agreements.

What guidance or instructions did you give to your committee and subsidiary body chairs? Did they follow your instructions?

Well, from the very beginning I advised all the chairs to exercise their authority, to be firm and decisive in guiding the work of their respective committees or subsidiary bodies. Furthermore, I also assured all of the chairs of my full assistance as and when required, and of my availability and accessibility to them at all times. It was important to assure them that the president would not compete with their work or authority. I was aware that all of the chairs, except for Subsidiary Body 2, would

be able to finalize their work but given the sensitivity and saliency of the Middle East issue, the work of Subsidiary Body 2 would be the very last to be completed. I must take this opportunity to compliment and to thank the chairmen of the main committees: Ambassador Camilo Reyes Rodríguez of Colombia (Main Committee I); Ambassador Markku Reimaa of Finland (Main Committee II); Ambassador Adam Kobieracki of Poland (Main Committee III); the Chairman of Subsidiary Body 1, Ambassador Clive Pearson of New Zealand, and of Subsidiary Body 2, Ambassador Christopher Westdal of Canada; as well as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee, Ambassador André Erdős of Hungary, and the Chairman of the Credentials Committee, Ambassador Makmur Widodo of Indonesia; and the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ms. Hannelore Hoppe of the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, for the commitment and diligence with which they performed their functions. I also greatly benefitted from the experience and wisdom of the Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala; as well as from the many NGOs that I consulted, including of course the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

How do the established practices of NPT review conferences, including the financing formula and rules of procedure, help or hinder the work of the conference president? What changes or improvements, in your view, are necessary?

The established practices of NPT review conferences have stood the test of time and work fairly well. Of course, the president has to rely on the cooperation and confidence of states parties to reach a successful outcome. In my view, the president has all of the authority that he needs—it is really up to the incumbent to exercise that authority with appropriate firmness and judiciousness. An area where the president's task can be made easier relates to financing of preparatory consultations. It is a real pity that there is no provision whatsoever to cover the travel costs of a conference president, or for that matter of a PrepCom chairman, as they have to engage in consultations to help them prepare for their important responsibilities. These travel costs have been borne by their respective countries and can impose quite a significant burden. I think it would only be appropriate and responsible for states parties to amend the financing rules of the conference in a manner to provide for appropriate funding to cover travel costs for consultations and

other meetings conducted in preparation for the NPT review conference and its preparatory committee.

How did you deal with the question of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia?

Fortunately, I resolved this issue early on, prior to the conference. I met with the Permanent Representative of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), and also of Russia and some other states. The outcome of these consultations was to replicate the practice since 1995, that of having a name plate for FRY but that the seat itself would remain unoccupied. This issue could have wasted valuable time, as indeed it did in 1995, but fortunately this particular contentious matter was defused and did not trouble us during the conference.

POLITICAL GROUPINGS

Do the traditional political groupings—i.e., the Western Group, Eastern Group, and NAM—still fulfill useful functions? How did these groupings contribute to the work of the conference and how or in what way did they facilitate a positive outcome?

The traditional political groupings are convenient vehicles for consultation and sharing of information both prior to and during NPT meetings. Some people have been somewhat critical of the NAM. But, let me state that while the NAM perhaps was not as active or as powerful at this conference compared to previous ones, it is committed to a formal process of reaching a common position on important issues such as nuclear disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation, cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and the Middle East. A ministerial meeting held in Cartagena a few weeks before the NPT review conference agreed on a common NAM paper and position which is fully supported by all NAM members. Of course, as with the other groupings, on certain specific issues some states may pursue more particular interests. In my capacity as conference president, and coming from a NAM member state as indeed were all previous NPT review conference presidents, I took it upon myself to attend several NAM meetings to personally brief delegates and to seek their support and to assure them that NAM interests would be accommodated to the extent possible. This provided much needed confidence to the NAM, which to its credit remained very flexible in pursuing its positions and was very accommodating in reach-

ing consensus agreement on the Final Document, even if it did not get everything that it had wanted.

PRESIDENT’S CONSULTATIONS

Did you meet with the five NWS as a group during the conference? And with the seven New Agenda Coalition (NAC) countries?

I met with many different countries during the conference, including the NWS and the New Agenda Coalition. Since the NAC and NWS began to discuss and negotiate the elements of the report of Subsidiary Body 1, during the last week, I would sit in some of the negotiating sessions both to keep myself abreast of developments and more importantly to encourage the 12 states to resolve their differences. Once this negotiation became deadlocked, on May 17, I summoned the NWS and the NAC to report on their deadlock to the larger group, with a view to putting them under greater pressure to agree to an agreed text. The idea proved to be a good one because the negotiating countries did feel the pressure, the dissatisfaction, and the frustration of the rest of the conference. I then had to send them back into their negotiating mode at a very late hour and made sure that they continued their negotiation rather than retiring for the night. The NAC were under intense strain and I urged them to resolve their internal differences and to negotiate with the NWS to reach an acceptable outcome. And I also encouraged the NWS to be flexible and accommodating. Ultimately, these efforts paid off and we were able to reach agreement on the crucial nuclear disarmament aspects of the work of the conference.

You were opposed to convening a formal “President’s Consultations” or “Friends of the Chair” mechanism to hammer out the key compromises (as happened in 1995)—why? In middle of the final week, you did call together a group of some 35 countries to negotiate remaining unresolved issues—why did you do so, how was this list of countries put together, what were your expectations of the results, and which countries or groups “pressured” you to convene such a group?

At the time that I accepted the nomination as president, I did not really like the idea of setting up a so-called “President’s Consultation” but decided to keep that option open. My principal goal was to allow the main committees and the subsidiary bodies to continue with their

work with a view to reaching agreement on their reports. Mindful of the experience at the 1995 NPTREC, I did not want to orphan the main committees and the subsidiary bodies by starting a parallel “President’s Consultation,” which would inevitably have had the result of drawing away the senior diplomats and moving the pressure to reach agreement to this small group, thus hampering the work of the main committees and the subsidiary bodies. Hence, I continued to hold that the main committees and the subsidiary bodies had to complete their work by the end of the third week, thus leaving the opportunity for the president to ask the chairs to continue with their efforts (but now on behalf of the president) to resolve outstanding matters during the final week. In the event, by the middle of the fourth week, it became obvious that the conference was deadlocked on the issues of nuclear disarmament and the Middle East. Under these circumstances, I had to find a way out and to consider some mechanism to break the deadlock. Eventually, under my authority to consult with delegations, I asked some 35 delegations representing all regional groupings and interest groups to meet with me to deal with the difficult issues left over in the reports of the three main committees. However, as I was aware, many other delegations also wanted to contribute to this effort, and they too were present in the meeting room. Despite requests from some to restrict the number of delegations present, I persevered with this format in a spirit of openness and transparency, and we were successful in resolving some of the outstanding issues pertaining to the report of Main Committee I and in securing agreement in principle on the “practical steps” for nuclear disarmament, on May 17. Having achieved this breakthrough, it was possible to return to open-ended consultations to deal with the other remaining items and to make all delegations face up to their responsibility to be transparent and to make further progress in concluding all elements of the work program. Because there was a momentum, I decided to encourage the NAC and the NWS to take up the remaining few “review” paragraphs of Main Committee I and to try to bridge their differences under the chairmanship of Norway. Also I asked the interested countries to solve the remaining problems of Main Committee 2 under the chairmanship of Japan, and I continuously maintained strong pressure on both these two negotiations.

NUCLEAR WEAPON STATES AND THE NEW AGENDA COALITION

The five NWS and the seven NAC decided to meet on their own to deal with the reports of Main Committee I and Subsidiary Body 1—was this done with your permission or under your authority? Were you concerned that any potential deal between the NWS and the NAC might run into difficulties with states parties and thus jeopardize the outcome of the conference? When the NWS and the NAC were stymied in their negotiations, you asked them to report on their progress in the aborted consultative group—what was your thinking behind this move; and do you think that by getting these 12 countries to report to the larger group, this helped to generate the required compromises?

By the end of the third week, despite there being general agreement on the basic elements of the report of Subsidiary Body 1 on nuclear disarmament, it became abundantly clear that further progress reaching precise formulations was being held up by the bickering between the NWS and the NAC. Given this situation, prior to my departure for London to attend another meeting over the weekend which had to do with UN talks on the situation in Western Sahara, I encouraged the NWS and the NAC to continue with the effort to reach agreed language. It was in this context that the 12 countries met over the weekend, first to try to resolve certain elements of the report of Main Committee I, and when this effort went reasonably well, they continued their negotiations on the elements of the report of Subsidiary Body 1. But by the middle of the last week, they remained mired in disagreement. Thus, as I have noted above, I decided to pull together a smaller group of delegations to try to deal with the remaining contentious issues. This format made it more difficult for the NWS and the NAC to hold rigidly to their positions and thus to continue the deadlock. In effect, they were forced to defend their positions in the open and thus to be responsive to pressure from the conference to account for their negotiations and hence to make the necessary difficult compromises.

Given its political composition, the NAC was a credible group representing the interests and aspirations of the NNWS on nuclear disarmament. And given that the elements of the report of Subsidiary Body 1 were generally acceptable to most if not all delegations, I was confident

that were the NWS and the NAC to reach agreement on a common text, then other delegations too would come around and support that compromise.

While Subsidiary Body 1 and then the NWS/NAC negotiation eventually resulted in a look forward on Article VI, Main Committee I remained deadlocked over its backward-looking review. How did you get Main Committee I to eventually produce its 14-paragraph backward-look or review report?

You will recall that some three or four contentious paragraphs from the report of Main Committee I were resolved in the presidential consultation. It was the maximum that I could achieve at that stage and once agreement was achieved on the formulation of the forward-look (report of Subsidiary Body 1) on the morning of May 19, the remaining 10 or so paragraphs of the Main Committee report were worked on during the last day and the following night between the NWS and the NAC.

What was the impact of the NWS statement? Did you play any role?

Obviously the NWS joint statement played a very important role. It indicated that the NWS were prepared to compromise their internal differences and work with one another. The NWS kept the president informed of their deliberations and regarding their drafting process. I also met individually with each of the NWS and strongly encouraged them to reach some compromise on national missile defense and other contentious issues and to agree to a joint statement.

What is your view of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's call for a conference on nuclear dangers? What might such a conference achieve?

The Secretary-General's idea obviously is a very good one. I was disappointed with the NWS approach to this matter and their opposition in principle to an international conference addressing the continuing nuclear dangers faced by the world due to the existence of some 30,000 nuclear weapons. Such a conference would be very useful in addressing all of the complex problems associated with nuclear weapons, and would have the advantage of including the presence of all UN member states—both NPT parties and non-parties.

ASSESSMENT

What were the important turning points in the conference that made a final document possible?

Well, I would say that in the first place, reaching agreement on the question of subsidiary bodies got the conference off to a positive start. Had this question not been resolved prior to the opening of the conference, we would have wasted much precious time and good will. In my view, this particular question was not that important and it would have been a great pity had we squandered time on its resolution. Second, the NWS joint statement indicated that the weapon states were prepared to compromise on their differences and were prepared to accept some further commitments toward nuclear disarmament. Third, was the breakthrough on May 17 on the elements of the report of Subsidiary Body 1, dealing with "practical steps" and an "unequivocal undertaking" to nuclear disarmament, even though these commitments were subject to certain conditions and were not absolute. Finally, agreement on improving the effectiveness of the strengthened review process completed the package. I was convinced throughout that the issue of improving the strengthened review process would be resolved and that the differences separating states were not all that great.

In your concluding statement you observed that: "...our results may not appear commensurate with the magnitude of the tasks and challenges facing us and the expectations of the international community. However, these results must be seen against the background of the prevailing political circumstances...." What do you mean by this?

It was indeed a source of great satisfaction that we were able to conclude our work on a positive note. The final outcome of the 2000 Review Conference, which was the product of a delicate hard-won compromise between divergent and sometimes conflicting positions, may be seen as inadequate in view of the challenges before us. However, it is in my opinion the best outcome we could have reached under the prevailing international conditions and the expectations of NPT parties. The NPT process must not be overloaded and should be kept to reviewing the implementation of the provisions of the treaty and of the outcome of the 1995, 2000, and future review conferences. The NPT process cannot withstand

the pressure of being used to solve other issues, such as for example differences on national missile defense, or the resolution of the problems in the Middle East or South Asia. We set the goal post much higher in terms of outcomes on nuclear disarmament than in 1995. And we succeeded in producing a coherent outcome, though had the Drafting Committee had more time available to it, the Final Document could have been more polished in terms of its formulations.

As I noted in my closing statement late in the afternoon of May 20, in accordance with Decision 1 on the "Strengthening of the Review Process" for the treaty adopted in 1995, the conference was successful in looking forward as well as back. It managed to evaluate the results of the period since 1995, including the implementation of the obligations of the states parties under the treaty, and to identify areas in which, and the means through which, further progress will be sought in the future, including the strengthening of the implementation of the provisions of the treaty and the achievement of its universality.

The conference again reaffirmed its conviction that the preservation of the integrity of the treaty and its strict implementation were essential to international peace and security, and recognized the crucial role of the NPT in nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Consequently, we were able to reach agreements on improving the review of the operation of the treaty. In so doing, we duly recognized the measure of progress in the implementation of the obligations of all states parties to the treaty, while at the same time urging for more determination in the realization of the undertakings by the NWS under Article VI of the treaty.

We underscored once again the paramount importance of achieving the goal of universality of the NPT and, in this regard, we urged those states not yet party to the treaty, namely Cuba, India, Israel, and Pakistan, to adhere to it promptly and without delay. We also emphasized the importance of full compliance of all states parties with all the provisions of the treaty.

Furthermore, we stressed the contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to the enhancement of global and regional peace and security and to the strengthening of the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

In addition, we reaffirmed the importance of legally binding security assurances by the five nuclear weapon

states to the non-nuclear weapon states parties to the treaty and urged further efforts in this regard.

We engaged in an in-depth consideration of the issue of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy under the IAEA safeguards and agreed on appropriate recommendations in this respect.

Most significantly, the conference agreed on some practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the treaty and paragraphs 3 and 4 (c) of the 1995 Decision on "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament." The implementation of these practical steps would undoubtedly bring us closer to our shared objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Regional issues were also the focus of attention at this conference. In particular, the situations in the Middle East and South Asia were the subject of an in-depth consideration and appropriate recommendations.

Finally, the necessity of keeping the issue of the improvement of the effectiveness of the strengthened review process for the treaty under constant review was emphasized and a decision aimed at further improving the effectiveness of the review process was adopted.

Regardless of the differing perspectives that states parties had over the current state of affairs on global nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament issues, there is no doubt that much more can and needs to be done! The common dream of a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons has yet to be realized. The long road leading to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons remains a distant and rugged one. But, I am certain that the outcome of this conference, achieved with the cooperation of all 157 states parties present, will have a major impact on deciding the future course of the NPT and the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

As called for in the Final Document, I am in the process of sending letters to each of the four remaining non-parties to the NPT, commending the Final Document to their attention, and communicating the message that the NPT regime remains credible and strong, and that pressure is being maintained to fulfill Article VI obligations on the total elimination of nuclear weapons.