

"Status and prospects of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation from a German perspective"

Keynote address by Gernot Erler, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in South Asia. A Global Perspective

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Since the end of the Cold War, the feeling that armed conflicts pose an existential threat, especially as a result of the large-scale use of nuclear weapons of mass destruction, has largely disappeared in Europe. However, the discussion on the proliferation of nuclear weapons and, above all, the cases of Iran and North Korea, which have attracted intense international attention during the last few years, serve as a warning that we must not delude ourselves into thinking that we live in a world free of nuclear dangers. And we are all aware that the nuclear-weapon states still have tens of thousands of nuclear weapons in their arsenals; but, of course, it is only too human not to want to think about these risks and dangers every day. The recent report that several missiles with nuclear warheads had been flown across the US by mistake therefore served as a wake-up call. That was probably no bad thing.

A look at South Asia, the focus of your conference, reveals that it would be wrong to concentrate solely, as happens time and again, on new proliferation risks and potential nuclear-weapon states. Two states – India and Pakistan – face each other in South Asia which are both in possession of nuclear weapons and have had a very difficult

and conflict-ridden relationship with one another since their founding, including a highly complicated unresolved regional conflict. Neither state has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and they have thus played a crucial role in preventing the Treaty from achieving universality from the outset. Reports that the two sides now want to step up efforts to tackle regional tensions and instabilities on the Subcontinent by engaging in dialogue and confidence-building measures should certainly be welcomed. But this cannot really give us peace of mind in view of the nuclear arsenals and efforts to arm on both sides.

However, I don't want to give a talk on the issues and problems being dealt with by your conference. Rather, I want to share some thoughts on the current state of the efforts to shape arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation policy from the German Government's perspective.

To come back to my introductory remark: despite the relief we still feel now that the Cold War is over, this end was – as astute observers have always known – not the end of history nor the dawn of a peaceful new age in which all the fears that weighed heavily on our minds during the Cold War vanished. Indeed we were forced to recognize not long after the fall of the Wall here in Berlin almost 18 years ago that we live in a world with new and more complex challenges to our security.

Our security situation has changed over the last two decades – and the changes have been truly radical:

- The threat of mutual nuclear annihilation, which dominated strategic thinking during the Cold War, seems to have disappeared. I say "seems to have disappeared" because the weapons which could bring about widespread annihilation are – as I've already pointed out – still in existence!
- 11 September confronted us with the new threats to our security in a very forceful manner. Since then, international terrorism has emerged as a quite new threat which feeds on the existence and the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Regional conflicts have gained a supraregional, in some cases even a global dimension. Proliferation has become a growing risk to international peace and security and it requires greater attention.
- And, above all, following the end of the East-West confrontation, we have witnessed the renewed outbreak of old conflicts we thought were long since settled and the emergence of new armed regional conflicts. And we're all aware that the risks posed by unresolved regional conflicts with potentially global repercussions have not been banished. Indeed, there is evidence that their virulence has increased.

The international community has to tackle these new challenges and dangers together. We can only deal with them effectively if we work

together. Today more than ever, our maxim must be: security is indivisible.

In this new security situation, our key task is to ensure security on the basis of jointly defined global norms and through cooperation rather than isolation and confrontation. The German Government fully supports this approach. Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control enshrined in international treaties are a key concern of Germany's foreign and security policy.

That an unchecked arms race doesn't enhance security is an important and still valid insight gained from the Cold War. Rather, we need common rules to contain military power, thus creating a basis for guaranteeing stability and security in the long term.

Any efforts in the arms control and disarmament sphere should, in our view, be based on existing multilateral treaties and the common norms laid down in them. The German Government believes that the preservation, development and any necessary adjustments of this multilateral framework are important tasks for the international community:

- These instruments provide the foundation for cooperative security. They form the basis for states' disarmament obligations both in the sphere of weapons of mass destruction, that is to say nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and in the field of conventional armament.

- These instruments establish the very legitimacy of the fight against proliferation, as exemplified by the EU strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the G8 initiatives or concrete measures such as the Proliferation Security Initiative or the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

- These instruments enable the international community in the first place to call to account any states which violate them and to ensure that any action taken against them has the authority of the United Nations Security Council.

The European Union reacted to the new challenges after 9/11 outlined above with the EU strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It was adopted by the European Council on 12 December 2003 and represents a comprehensive and coherent basis for joint action by the EU. Here, too, the emphasis is on strengthening multilateral treaties: by developing the verification and implementation instruments, by beefing up the export control regime, as well as by stepping up international cooperation.

However, the authority of the multilateral treaty system will be undermined if the binding effect of the treaties is weakened due to a lack of political commitment to their preservation and to their enhancement or, worse, if treaty obligations and rights are interpreted unilaterally in favour of certain groups of states. The unsatisfactory outcome of the 2005 NPT Review Conference and the failure to agree

on common language on disarmament and non-proliferation in the final document of the UN summit that same year were thus worrying developments. The start of the new review cycle in Vienna this spring at the first Preparatory Commission can thus only give grounds for cautious optimism because, despite an impressive commitment to the Treaty itself, differing implementation priorities persist.

Once again it has been demonstrated that the Non-Proliferation Treaty in particular should be more than a mere instrument for combating proliferation. Rather, this Treaty is based on a bargain which must be honoured if it is to survive in the long term: the non-nuclear weapons states agreed not to possess or acquire nuclear weapons in return for a promise by the nuclear weapons states to disarm. It is therefore crucial that, as in the cases of Iran and North Korea, we not only work with the utmost determination towards ensuring that the Treaty's non-proliferation commitment is upheld. Rather, we need a new momentum in nuclear disarmament. Yet any advances achieved in the implementation of the disarmament obligation are not about "all or nothing", for there is no realistic alternative to gradual progress. Forward movement in nuclear disarmament is, however, essential if we are to succeed in the fight against proliferation.

The agenda to which the German Government is committed already exists:

The 13 Practical Steps outlined in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference contain the measures which continue to be

necessary for further disarmament progress in the nuclear field. This includes, first and foremost, the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the speedy opening of negotiations on banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes (Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, FMCT). Moreover, progress in the nuclear disarmament of the two largest nuclear-weapon states, Russia and the US, is of special importance.

In addition to this global agenda, our attention must, of course, turn to arms control at regional level. In Europe we have created a set of finely-tuned instruments, especially in the fields of conventional arms control and military confidence-building. This basis for a common security area must be preserved and adapted to the changed circumstances. Germany strongly supports this line. This is particularly topical at present when we are struggling to conserve and further develop the Treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe concluded in 1990 which marked a high point at the end of the Cold War in terms of arms control.

However, we aren't only faced with concerns and problems in Europe. When we look at the rest of the world, we see considerable arms control deficits in other regions, especially in potential conflict regions. In South Asia, in the Middle East and in East Asia, the international treaty regimes have to be strengthened and further developed in order to more successfully counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The united front presented by the international community in its joint efforts to resolve the Iranian

nuclear problem, highlighted once more by the joint declaration of the six Foreign Ministers issued in New York on 28 September, is therefore an encouraging sign. With cohesion of a similar kind being practised in North Korea's case, there are signs that a solution can be reached. This gives cause for hope.

In both cases, it must be remembered that the international community's approach to make these states embrace international cooperation is not based on the "law of the strong" who try to impose their will on others. In both cases, we are acting on the basis of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the IAEA agreements, as well as the Charter of the United Nations. We are thus acting on the basis of multilateral agreements, that is to say we were acting on the firm ground of legitimacy and legality.

This firm ground will also have to be preserved if we want to get to grips with a problem connected to non-proliferation and the fight against proliferation which is rightly being much discussed at present: the question as to how we can organize a fair, economical and politically safe supply of nuclear fuel for all interested states. Let me emphasize that this is not about indirectly promoting nuclear power – as you know the German Government has a clear position on that. This is about how the peaceful use of nuclear energy – and the decision in favour of nuclear energy is up to each individual state – is possible without jeopardizing nuclear non-proliferation.

The German Government is convinced that this is only possible within the framework of a cooperative approach. Efforts to divide the world into fuel cycle states and other states will not succeed. We need new political-institutional approaches which make all states showing goodwill a fair offer. The proposal put forward by Germany is aimed at a solution based on multilateral treaties. In essence, we propose that the IAEA be put in charge of a special area in which a commercial uranium enrichment plant could be established free of any interference from nation-states. This solution is – just like all other proposals put forward in this context – complex and will have to be fleshed out. Parallel to your conference, the Federal Foreign Office is holding an international workshop on this issue, with the aim of fostering the clarification of difficult questions. Here, too, the maxim is: more cooperation leads to more security.

Let me conclude by saying that from a global perspective, in particular against the background of our own experience in Europe, I would like to rephrase the title of this conference "Conference on Security and Cooperation in South Asia: A Global Perspective" slightly to "Conference on Security through Cooperation in South Asia". That is to say, security through cooperation – cooperation at bilateral, regional and global level.

The German Government's arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation policy is founded on this approach, both in its efforts to preserve and strengthen the multilateral treaty instruments and in the quest for answers to new challenges.