



Sergio Duarte

«I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SIMPLY TIGHTENING
NONPROLIFERATION CONTROLS OR NARROWING
THE DEFINITION OF «PEACEFUL USES» WILL SOLVE
THE GLOBAL NUCLEAR THREAT»

Security Index Editor-in-Chief Vladimir Orlov interviews one of the world leading experts in the area of disarmament and nonproliferation Sergio de Queiroz Duarte. In July 2007 Ambassador Duarte was appointed High Representative for Disarmament at the UN Under-Secretary-General level.

SECURITY INDEX: The great bargain envisioned by the NPT is similar to navigating along the river where one bank is nonproliferation, while the other is disarmament. The year of 2010 will be the year of the 8th NPT Review Conference which will set up a course in these fields for the next five years. However, it is crucial to agree on the course beforehand. In this sense, the upcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee will indicate readiness of the NPT parties for cooperation. What do you expect from the May 2008 Prepcom?

DUARTE: There was a good start to the review process at the first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna in 2007. The fact that an agenda was adopted means that substantial discussion can take place, without overburdening the process with prolonged deliberations on procedural matters. In accordance with the agreement on «Improving the effectiveness of the strengthened review process for the Treaty» from the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the first two sessions of the Preparatory Committee shall «consider principles, objectives and ways in order to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality». I therefore hope for a constructive debate that can be summarized and brought forward to the third session, and thus lead to recommendations for the 2010 Review Conference.

It is essential for the 2010 NPT Review Conference to be successful, keeping in mind the disappointing outcome of the 2005 conference, the failure of the World Summit to address disarmament and nonproliferation issues, and the stagnation of nuclear disarmament diplomacy over the last several years. The NPT must be strengthened and faith in the Treaty rebuilt, as part of a broader process of reaffirming the rule of law as well as the importance of multilateralism.

I would like to emphasize that the NPT review process is not an empty ritual – it is an indispensable tool for assessing the health of the NPT regime and for holding states parties accountable for fulfilling their commitments. I remain hopeful that the states parties will work for a successful outcome of the May 2008 session of the Preparatory Committee. While there will still be disagreements, I believe the states parties will recognize how such an outcome would serve their common interests.

SECURITY INDEX: The IAEA safeguards are intended to verify that non-nuclear states do not covertly develop nuclear weapons capability. However, it is clear that such developed countries as Japan, Canada or Germany would not sacrifice their good relations with other countries in order to build nuclear weapons. From this perspective, IAEA inspections in the developed countries seem to be a waste of money. Would not it be more efficient to cancel inspection in the states with an excellent nonproliferation record and confine control measures to, say, quarterly reports, while increasing control measures for those countries which cause or might cause concern?



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DUARTE: The IAEA's resources to implement its safeguards responsibilities are not unlimited. This is why the Agency has been working for many years to improve the efficiency of safeguards, especially in states with an impeccable track record, both developed and developing, through various limitations on the frequency or intrusiveness of inspections and other such measures. While inspections can be rationalized in countries deemed to have an excellent non-proliferation record, they should not be completely done away with, for both safety and political reasons. It is important for the safeguards system to be fully implemented in all states in a fair and balanced manner, while also maintaining a high level of transparency. Fissile material is inherently dangerous and merits the most stringent forms of control wherever it may be. Since the concept of «safeguards» was first conceived over a half-century ago, the world community has envisioned such safeguards as applying globally, not just to selected states. I believe that this approach continues to serve the interests of international peace and security.

SECURITY INDEX: Nuclear weapons used to be a domain of the wealthy states. However, now that we look at those countries that tested nuclear devices recently or are suspected in similar activities, we can see that they might be considered poor. They choose nuclear weapons as the cheapest way to secure their sovereignty. Do you think that such trend may result in further horizontal proliferation?

DUARTE: Although the decisions to develop nuclear weapons have always been made in secret, most observers have concluded that such decisions have had many plausible foundations, rather than just one. Some states may see such weapons as symbols of prestige and may pursue them simply for nationalistic reasons. Some may view them as an affordable or effective means of countering a foreign threat, whether it arises from other weapons of mass destruction or from conventional arms. Some may seek the capability to make such weapons quickly, should future security threats arise that may justify acquiring them.

Yet regardless of their ultimate cause, the effects of such decisions are quite clear. Once a new actor has obtained this capability, it could lead to further proliferation, as the states in the vicinity might feel threatened and hence pressured to obtain equal capabilities. More weapons programs will add to existing risks of accidents, miscalculations, and possible unauthorized uses. As more states develop nuclear weapons, this also increases the risk of non-state actors obtaining and using nuclear or radiological weapons.

For all these reasons, we must strive towards full compliance with all NPT obligations, both on the disarmament and nonproliferation side, and towards the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons.

SECURITY INDEX: Controversy surrounding the Iranian nuclear program has led to an increasing distrust between Iran and some other NPT parties. On the one hand, the crisis was caused by the facts of Iranian defiance of the IAEA Statute and the NPT provisions. On the other hand, it was also stimulated by the lack of definition what «peaceful nuclear activity» means. Do you think that the international community should undertake such an ambitious and challenging task as to define this and other terms provided in the NPT and add more clarity in order to avoid similar crises in the future?

DUARTE: The task of now defining formally what «peaceful nuclear activity» means is much easier proposed than implemented. The hard part would be to achieve a consensus among NPT states parties on this definition and achieving such a consensus could prove a complex and lengthy process. Many states would be unwilling to re-interpret provisions of the NPT, while others may consider this only if other provisions were also re-interpreted, including those dealing with nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. With respect to peaceful uses, it may now be more important and effective to ensure the universality of, and full compliance with, the IAEA Safeguards System, as well as the Additional Protocol, in order to remove any doubt there might be about the intentions of a country's nuclear program.

The creation of international nuclear fuel centers, as suggested by the IAEA, in order to guarantee access to nuclear fuel and thus remove the perceived necessity of domestic enrichment capabilities, also merits further consideration as a possible means to reduce proliferation risks.

I do not believe, however, that simply tightening nonproliferation controls or narrowing the definition of «peaceful uses» will solve the global nuclear threat. The General Assembly and the

NPT states parties have long emphasized that nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation are both needed to address this challenge and I believe that approach is correct.

SECURITY INDEX: One of the solutions suggested for the current Iranian crisis is to establish regional international uranium enrichment center. Do you find this initiative viable?

DUARTE: Iran has been offered to participate in an international fuel services center on Russian soil, whereby it would receive nuclear fuel services including enrichment, but has so far not taken the idea up and appears to distrust the idea of such a centre outside its borders. Iran has stated that it does not believe it would have guaranteed access to nuclear fuel and therefore needs to make its own rather than depend on international suppliers.

Whatever decision is taken, the important thing is that the confidence of the international community in Iran's intentions is restored. I also note that in 2006 the international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission under Hans Blix proposed that all states in the region should for «a prolonged period of time» commit themselves to a verified arrangement not to have any enrichment, reprocessing or other sensitive fuel-cycle activities on their territories, coupled with fuel supply assurances. This is another option that I believe deserves some serious consideration.

SECURITY INDEX: Speaking of uranium enrichment, Russia has finalized the establishment of the International uranium enrichment center in Angarsk. What positive influence could it bring to the nonproliferation regime?

DUARTE: The establishment of the Angarsk International Uranium Enrichment Centre (IUEC) is a constructive step that can help meet concerns regarding nuclear proliferation, especially as the energy crisis and concerns over global warming have triggered calls for a growing dependency on nuclear energy. While the idea of international control over the nuclear fuel cycle was first proposed in the 1946 Baruch Plan, it is only in recent years that there has been real progress in this field. Creating joint international ventures for the enrichment of uranium and providing credible assurances about the supply of nuclear fuel from these international centers under IAEA safeguards would reduce proliferation risks since it eliminates the need for countries to have their own uranium enrichment capabilities.

Moscow has invited several countries to participate in the IUEC, which will be set up as a joint stock company, guaranteeing financial independence from state budgets. Countries would receive profits from enrichment activities but not have access to the technology. It is important to note that countries invited to participate should meet established nonproliferation requirements and should not develop indigenous sensitive nuclear technologies.

Russia has been very proactive regarding the establishment of international nuclear fuel centers, and has previously signed the Additional Protocol, making it possible for the IAEA to complete full inspections of the facility. The announcement that Russia will fund and create a low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel bank controlled by the IAEA at Angarsk is also a welcome step to guarantee the supply of nuclear fuel. The establishment of this center could serve as first step and a precedent for the creation of other international nuclear fuel or uranium enrichment establishments.

SECURITY INDEX: Due to the readiness of the concerned parties to compromise during the six-party talks on North Korea, *modus operandi* has been found. At the same, time general security situation in Asia is characterized by the fact that there is no comprehensive security system similar to that in Europe: security in Asia depends on a number of bilateral treaties without a multilateral treaty similar to the CFE treaty in Europe. Do you think that improvement of the general security in Asia inspired by lessening of tensions on the Korean peninsula can stimulate discussions on a comprehensive multilateral security agreement for the region?

DUARTE: I am pleased with the progress we have seen thus far in the six-party talks, given the positive steps that have been taken to disable nuclear facilities in the DPRK and to resume IAEA verification activities. I view these as steps toward fulfilling the terms of the Six-Party Joint Statement of September 19, 2005, which envisioned the DPRK «returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards». I have no doubt that the full implementation of these commitments will substantially improve the security environment in Northeast Asia, and I hope that the states of the region will be able to deepen this cooperation in the years ahead and expand its geographic scope.



I note in this respect that the September 2005 Joint Statement identified the need «to explore ways and means for promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia» and the 13 February 2007 action plan established a Working Group to consider the idea of a «Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism». The fate of such an initiative is impossible to predict and will be determined by the collective will of the states of the region.

Full implementation of commitments to exclude nuclear weapons from the Korean peninsula would certainly improve security environment in the region. I note that all states in the region have endorsed the goal of «general and complete disarmament», which encompasses both the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and the reduction and limitation of conventional arms. I believe that future regional arrangements that contribute to the advancement of this larger goal would substantially strengthen international peace and security, both within the region and indeed globally.

SECURITY INDEX: In October 2007 at the UN General Assembly representatives of Russia and the United States suggested that INF treaty should cover not only U.S. and Russian missiles but also include other states' intermediate missiles. Basically, they spoke in favor of the universality of the treaty. Do you think this initiative has future?

DUARTE: I welcome any statement by the United States and the Russian Federation that indicates support for this important treaty. While there is considerable merit in pursuing a treaty to ban globally the development or deployment of intermediate-range missiles, it is often forgotten that the preamble of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty identifies the broader goal of eliminating the means for delivering nuclear weapons, which is itself part of the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament.

Eliminating intermediate-range missiles would therefore be a necessary but not a sufficient step toward achieving this goal. For example, the problems of intercontinental ballistic missiles and of other nuclear-weapon delivery systems would not be addressed by such a treaty. Furthermore, I would not be surprised if many states would be reluctant to give up their missile options without corresponding concessions by states possessing these longer-range delivery systems. Chances for progress in missile reductions and eventual disarmament will also be significantly enhanced if there is an improvement in political relations between states that are engaging, with varying degrees of intensity, in local or regional arms races.

If we could improve regional stability and work towards equal security for all, the likelihood of expanding the «rule of law» into the field of missiles would increase greatly.

In the meantime, agreeing to take certain confidence-building measures like pre-notification of missile tests, improved transparency, limitations on deployment, and other such initiatives could promote stability and set the stage for further progress in the field of disarmament.

SECURITY INDEX: The CFE treaty has been the foundation of the European security which was important when two major military blocks dominated the continent. Do you think that there is still need in such an agreement?

DUARTE: The CFE Treaty has been widely and justifiably heralded throughout the international community as a milestone in conventional arms control. It led not just to the regulation but also to the verified physical destruction of thousands upon thousands of conventional arms, and thereby remains one of the most significant achievements in this field.

While I would agree that there is definitely a continuing need for such a convention, I also recognize that no treaty is locked in time and free from the need to adjust to changing circumstances, and to this extent, the future of this convention is clearly in the hands of its parties.

The UN Charter clearly recognizes the important contributions that regional arrangements can make in strengthening international peace and security, specifically those arrangements that are «consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations» (Article 52). The CFE treaty is surely consistent both with the disarmament objectives of the Charter and the primary obligation to avoid the threat or use of force, and as such, I believe that it deserves the international acclaim that it has received.

