

1. (Impact of INF/JCPOA setbacks on region and beyond)

From a UN perspective, I think the response has to be fourfold.

First, we recognized and applauded the fact that after many scares during the Cold War, the two superpowers of that era began to put in place key planks as nuclear risk reduction and arms control measures. This included significant reductions in the numbers of nuclear warheads held by both sides. Amidst the heightened tensions caused by competing missile deployments in Europe on both sides of the Cold War battlefield, the then-Soviet Union and the United States negotiated, signed and fully implemented the INF treaty which was the first *disarmament* agreement of the nuclear age. There were three significant aspects to this deal. It eliminated an entire class of nuclear (and conventional) weapon delivery system; it ushered in and underwrote strategic stability in the entire European continent – the frontline of the Cold War strategic confrontation – for three decades; and it was premised on the joint declaration by General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan that a nuclear war cannot be won and therefore must never be fought.

Thus the INF treaty was critical proof of the fact that both sides were *acting* – not just talking – like responsible nuclear powers. By the same token, the collapse of the INF is evidence of the decline of that sense of responsibility for safeguarding the nuclear peace.

Second, and following from that, it is of course a historical fact that unilateral measures and bilateral agreements between Moscow and Washington brought down global nuclear stockpiles by 80-85 per cent from their peak levels in the 1980s. But now it seems evident that further progress in nuclear arms control and disarmament will need to move beyond just these two, for we have left behind the world of nuclear dyads and entered a world of interlinked nuclear chains. To this end, multilateral negotiations and agreements will be required, ideally culminating in a universal and fully verifiable Nuclear Weapons Convention. And the simple fact remains that the United Nations is the core of the global multilateral order with unmatched international legitimacy and a unique convening power.

Third, the JCPOA showed the way for resolution of regional non-proliferation challenges through a multilaterally negotiated, UN-endorsed and independently verified nuclear arms control agreement. When we look at the complexity and difficulties of the North Korean challenge after the fact, the great achievement of the JCPOA was that it amounted to disarmament before the fact. And the fact that the United States can walk away from the JCPOA without penalty points to an enduring pathology of the UN system: who will watch the guardians – the P5 – to hold them to independent international oversight and accountability?

Fourth and finally, coming to the Ban Treaty, far from discrediting it, the INF and JCPOA developments validate the assumptions behind the Ban Treaty and its process and vision. Assumptions, in the sense that (1) nuclear risks are spreading, multiplying and becoming more acute but meanwhile (2) the mantra of step-by-step approach by

those with the bomb as the only credible pathway to nuclear disarmament came to be viewed and derided as an alibi for perpetual inaction. Process and vision in the sense that the international community acting as the United Nations is as big a stakeholder in nuclear peace as the possessor states, and needs to take ownership of the process and provide shock therapy to revive the comatose nuclear disarmament agenda.

2. Risks of further nuclearization in the region

The motivations behind the Australian discussion on independent nuclearization are threefold. The Pacific balance of power is changing to Australia's discomfort, as its primary security guarantor is gradually, steadily and unwillingly ceding strategic space to China. The steady militarization of disputed but China-occupied islets has raised the potential threat consciousness in some analysts, officials and political leaders. Second, there is fear that the changing balance of power could weaken the US *ability* to come to the defence of Australia. And third, the transactional approach of the Trump administration has raised serious doubts about the US *desire and will* to come to the defence of Australia.

That said, two important qualifications. Interest in possible Australian nuclearization is so far limited to a tiny fringe element of once influential but now ex senior defence officials. And secondly, in any case even their advocacy is to preposition Australia with the creation of the necessary infrastructure to acquire the bomb at an indeterminate time in the future should Australia determine then that an independent deterrent was in its best strategic interest. So we should not exaggerate either the seriousness or the imminence of this possibility.

3. Strategies for nuclear risk reduction

The Ban Treaty has addressed the first two parts of the forward-looking agenda: delegitimization and prohibition. The NWS essentially argued for an internally contradictory position: that they did not have a legal obligation under Article VI of the NPT to disarm, and yet there was no legal gap on prohibition. The gap has now been closed unambiguously.

But the UN General Assembly should take one more critical step: reaffirm in a resolution the Reagan-Gorbachev declaration that, in the interests of the very survival of humanity, a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought.

Beyond this the positions of the ICNND as well as the APLN have always been very clear. In turn these positions are derived from the important and still relevant report of the ICCND co-chaired by our moderator for the day Gareth Evans, and his Japanese counterpart as a former Foreign Minister, Yoriko Kawaguchi. In other words ICNND was an international commission that was regionally initiated, led and owned. And the four 'Ds' as described by Gareth do provide an important avenue for bridging the gap between the NPT and the Ban Treaty. For example a global No First Use agreement would help to reduce the global nuclear temperature.

Let us not forget the critical norms and goals on which the two treaties are agreed: nuclear safety, nuclear security, nuclear non-proliferation, and, at least in rhetoric and vision, even nuclear disarmament. Where they differ fundamentally is on nuclear deterrence as doctrine and practice and, working back from that, on continued nuclear possession, posture and deployment practices. But expressing scorn and disdain for two-thirds of the international community is not the recommended option for bridging the gap.

The biggest problem with the step-by-step approach has been that no forward steps have been visible at all for many years, while some backward steps – JCPOA, INF – have been only too visible. Since the Ban Treaty even the language of the step-by-step approach has been replaced by the language of a progressive approach, of creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament, and of creating an environment conducive to nuclear disarmament. The four Ds between them offer some practical, credible steps forward. They will reduce the risks while providing concrete evidence of intent to disarm in the finite future.