

Extracts from speech by Australia's Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, Stockholm - 18 May 2011

Nuclear Proliferation

We must also deal with the overriding challenge of nuclear weapons – both in the trans-Atlantic and the trans-Pacific, including Europe and Asia.

East Asia is also seeing significant nuclear proliferation.

The DPRK nuclear program is deeply destabilising.

China's strategic rocket force modernisation program continues.

As does India's.

And Pakistan's nuclear weapons program (combined with the legacy of AQ Khan's proliferation activities abroad) also represent real strategic challenges for East Asia into the future.

Three years ago Australia and Japan launched the International Commission for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

This brought together a body of leaders in the field, drawn from a range of countries right across the nuclear divide, to look at ways of advancing a world free of nuclear weapons.

It produced a report that injected fresh thinking into what had become a stale debate.

That was a substantial contribution, but the need for further work and action continues.

So I am pleased that two initiatives are being launched today in Canberra that will take up the challenge from here.

The first is a new Asia Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

The network - modelled on a similar European counterpart, convened by Des Browne, the former Defence Secretary of the United Kingdom - will comprise more than thirty former senior political, diplomatic and military leaders from 13 countries of the region.

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Former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans will convene the group which will seek to energise policy-makers and public opinion to pursue a world in which nuclear weapons are contained, diminished and ultimately eliminated.

The second initiative is the establishment of a permanent centre at the Australia National University in Canberra to support the work of the network and the outcomes of the Commission.

I am very pleased that much of the intellectual firepower behind this new centre will come from SIPRI here in Sweden, as well as from the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

I expect that the influence, energy and determination of these good people from Stockholm, Geneva, Canberra and the broader Asia-Pacific will take forward the critically important global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda.

But governments also have an important role to play.

That is why, at the official level, the governments of Australia and Japan have launched the Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI).

Like the Asia Pacific Leadership Network, the NPDI is also acutely conscious of the problem of nuclear proliferation in Asia where long standing territorial disputes remain rife.

The NPDI comprises ten governments from across the globe.

It is co-chaired by Australia and Japan, but draws its membership from a disparate group of states.

Some that are in alliance relationships with the United States, others that are members of the Non-Aligned movement; some from the developed and others from the developing world; some with civil nuclear industries, others that rely on other sources of energy.

The group is new – its meeting in Berlin two weeks ago was only its second.

The fundamental mandate of the group is to take forward the recommendations of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

It seeks practical outcomes - tangible progress, not rhetorical declarations.

In Berlin, the group agreed on some initial concrete steps.

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First, to conclude work on a standard reporting form for the nuclear weapons states, to record their progress towards disarmament.

It is important that there be more transparency in this process if the world is to have confidence that real progress is being made in reducing and, eventually, eliminating nuclear weapons.

Second, we agreed to give the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty negotiations – which have been languishing in the Conference on Disarmament for fifteen years – one final push in the coming months.

If negotiations in Geneva do not progress this year, we have indicated that we are prepared to bring this important disarmament challenge to the UN General Assembly to determine how to move ahead.

Third, the group will also use its combined diplomatic effort to press those states which have not yet brought into force an Additional Protocol to do so.

Through these practical, tangible – if modest – steps, the NPDI aims to bring new life to the global disarmament agenda.

And, over time, to make progress towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, set out by President Obama in Prague.

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