

**SECURITY COUNCIL SUMMIT ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS:  
WHAT THE RESOLUTION DOES AND DOES NOT SAY**

(September 24, 2009, 9-11 am)

This will be the first ever meeting of the Security Council at the level of heads of state to be solely devoted to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It presents a great opportunity to ensure that the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference strengthens the non-proliferation regime and to advance the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons called for by President Obama in his April 5, 2009 speech in Prague and repeated in his speech today (September 23) to the UN General Assembly.

The resolution likely to be adopted will go some way towards accomplishing those objectives but will not be by any means transformational. As tabled by the United States last week, the resolution largely affirms the Obama agenda as announced in Prague. It demonstrates the resolve of the Obama administration to press ahead, and is positive for that reason, especially when joined with the decision to scrap Bush administration plans for European missile defence systems to intercept ICBMs. One important audience is the US government. The resolution is saying: "We're serious about this, get on board."

Like the Prague speech, the resolution generally endorses:

- \* early entry into force of the CTBT
- \* negotiation of a treaty to ban production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons
- \* US-Russian talks on an agreement on strategic nuclear arms to replace START

Here and throughout, the resolution "calls," "welcomes," etc. Unlike previous resolutions on non-proliferation (Iran, North Korea, non-state actors), there are no mandatory decisions on substantive measures.

One point found in the Prague speech is notably lacking in the resolution: reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. Nor are there innovations regarding arms control/disarmament or the role of the Security Council in that regard. For example, there is:

- \* no initiation of a disarmament process involving states possessing nuclear arsenals
- \* no establishment of a subsidiary body on non-proliferation and disarmament, or support for reform of the Council to make it more effective in responding to violations of non-proliferation and disarmament obligations
- \* no step to fulfill the Council's responsibility under the UN Charter to propose plans for disarmament

In contrast, there is detailed elaboration and development of non-proliferation and anti-terrorism measures. For example, the resolution calls for:

- \* securing all weapons-usable fissile material in the world within four years - an Obama goal
- \* conversion of research reactors to use of low enriched uranium, making weapons-usable material less accessible
- \* adoption of multilateral measures on regulation of nuclear fuel production and supply by the IAEA Board of Governors

Lacking is any call for a halt to production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons by all states possessing nuclear arsenals, pending negotiation of a treaty. It appears that China prevented its inclusion. A halt to production of fissile materials in South Asia would be significant because it would essentially end the serious quantitative nuclear arms race there. India and Pakistan are the only states known to be currently producing materials for weapons (Israel might be), but China may want to preserve the option.

While not naming Iran or North Korea, the resolution makes quite clear that the Council will retain its role in policing compliance with non-proliferation obligations.

In sum, while the resolution robustly asserts and develops the Security Council's role in preventing the acquisition of nuclear weapons by additional states and by terrorists, its current significance lies mostly in the signal that the Obama administration intends to pursue the existing arms control agenda. To live up to Obama's Prague commitment "to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," the resolution will need to pave the way for a more ambitious effort, not only to contain the spread of nuclear weapons, but to end reliance on them by existing nuclear powers and set in motion the process of their elimination.

Dr. John Burroughs, Executive Director of the New-York based Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, has been meeting with UN missions of Security Council members regarding the Summit and has reviewed drafts of the resolution. He wrote a two-page paper this summer, "Recommended UN Security Council Actions to Advance Nuclear Disarmament," available at <http://ent.groundspring.org/EmailNow/pub.php?module=URLTracker&cmd=track&j=291970525&u=3228506>, and authored "The Role of the Security Council" in Michael Spies and John Burroughs, eds., Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security (2007), available at <http://ent.groundspring.org/EmailNow/pub.php?module=URLTracker&cmd=track&j=291970525&u=3228507>. Burroughs is widely published, with articles or op-eds in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, World Policy Journal, Harvard International Review, Chicago Sun-Times, and Newsday, and has done many radio and TV interviews across the country. He will be at the United Nations on September 24, and can be reached at 917-439-4585.