



Secretary-General

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SECRETARY-GENERAL, URGING CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TO FULFIL INTERNATIONAL EXPECTATIONS, SAYS WORLD CANNOT WAIT FOR NEW CATASTROPHES

Following is the statement read out by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the opening plenary of the 2014 session of the Conference on Disarmament, in Geneva today:

Let me begin by wishing you all the best for the happy new year. In my part of the world, 2014, this year has been designated the “year of the blue horse”. A horse represents of course vigour and speed — and a blue horse of course is an animal of imagination.

I hope this august forum — as the sole standing body on disarmament negotiations — will take inspiration and make 2014 a year of creativity and action.

I will be very frank, ladies and gentlemen. This is my fourth appearance before the CD, but the first in my second term. When I considered addressing you once again today, some of our senior advisers counselled against it. They said there are little prospects for progress this year. They wondered about the point of taking time out of a very busy schedule and an already full schedule on the eve of the Geneva Conference on Syria.

But I decided to come and meet you. Why? Because I am a strong believer in multilateralism. I want you to know that I have not given up hope for this noble body. I want to encourage you to live up to the international community’s expectations. Even though your mandate is to disarm, today, I say, “arm yourself, arm yourself with the spirit of blue horse and run. Run fast and run far”.

Since my last visit to you in 2011, the Conference on Disarmament has remained unable to begin substantive negotiations. But the world has not waited. Last year, the international community reacted in horror to the atrocious use of chemical weapons in Syria. In one voice, we condemned these acts as an outrageous violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime. The abhorrent use of chemical weapons was a stark reminder of the need to confront the dangers of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. We cannot wait for new catastrophes to act.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is your legacy. The CD brought it to life. The presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] is a recognition of the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation for world peace. I hope you will be inspired by this.

My message is clear. Do not wait for others to move. Be the first mover. Do not hide behind utopian logic which says that until we have the perfect security environment, nuclear disarmament cannot proceed. This is old-think. This is the mentality of the cold war era. We must face the realities of the twenty-first century. The Conference on Disarmament can be a driving force for building a safer world and a better future. That is its very mission.

As you all know, I have placed disarmament and non-proliferation as a leading priority on the United Nations agenda. A functional machinery can and must contribute substantially to international peace and security. Savings in weaponry can contribute to development and improve global well-being. Your work can make a significant contribution as the international community strives hard to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and craft a solid post-2015 development agenda.

There is progress on which to build. The open-ended working group convened last year in Geneva generated some new thinking on the way forward. The High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament demonstrated that this issue remains a major international priority and deserves attention at the highest levels.

There is growing understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. I recognize and welcome the serious efforts you have made to end the impasse. While there was no breakthrough, a constructive spirit prevailed last year. The various presidencies engaged in active consultations. The Informal Working Group represented an innovative attempt to take modest steps forward. Yet the pervasive cycle of pessimism in this body must still be overcome or else the CD will be overtaken by events.

I have also come to share with you my thoughts on a possible way forward. While you continue to seek the path towards renewed disarmament negotiations, it is important that you develop treaty frameworks and proposals through structured discussions. Laying such a foundation for future negotiations would be a concrete first step towards revalidating the relevance of the Conference. I hope the CD can make good progress before this spring's third preparatory meeting for the 2015 NPT Review Conference. This will significantly boost the morale for this important event.

I am committed to doing all I can to assist you to launch negotiations on the important items on the agenda of the Conference. I take this opportunity to formally present to you Michael Møller, whom I have recently appointed as Acting Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and my Personal Representative to the Conference. Many of you know him already and he brings long experience to the role.

I leave you today with the hope that the progress of the past session, your previous successes and a renewed sense of commitment will serve as a stepping stone towards resuming substantive work.

I wish you success in your proceedings and in keeping pace with the blue horse.

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