# NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation
# Qatar 2015

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Thank you very much for the kind introduction. It is a delight to be back in Doha, and I would like to extend a special thank you to our Qatari hosts for giving us all an opportunity to travel to your dazzling capital city. This is the first time the NATO WMD Conference has been held outside Europe, and I know we are all tremendously grateful to the government of Qatar for the invitation to Doha and, of course, most importantly, for its efforts to promote and build peace and security across the Middle East and beyond. The issues we are addressing here today are perennially difficult, and it takes tremendous fortitude and dedication to work for nuclear security year-after-year. So I know we all appreciate the Qatari government's efforts, and I also appreciate the energy and commitment of everyone in this room tonight. In my view, there is no more important work than this.

There also is no more complicated work than this, especially today. Let me begin by stating the obvious: This is an exceptionally challenging time for advancing the issues central to this conference – WMD arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation.

The world's nuclear-armed states are continuing to modernize their arsenals, signaling their reliance on nuclear weapons for decades to come; dialogue among the nuclear weapons states has produced few tangible results on disarmament; sensitive nuclear technologies are spreading as more states seek nuclear power; regional conflict persists in South Asia and could have catastrophic consequences; tensions in the Middle East could lead to an expansion of nuclear capabilities in this region; DAESH continues its brutal rampage across Syria and Iraq as the chaos and humanitarian cost of war in Syria mounts; terrorists worldwide continue to seek weapons of mass destruction; there's been little or no progress on further ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and formal talks on the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty haven't even begun; governments remain woefully unprepared to address cyber vulnerabilities that could lead to an accidental or unauthorized launch; and relations between the West and Russia are dangerously strained over Ukraine and other issues. Add to that the unsettling fact that there are still more than 17,000 nuclear weapons in the world today, not to mention an additional 2,000 metric tons of weapons usable nuclear material, some of which is poorly secured and vulnerable to theft or sale on the black market.

Our overall agenda, never an easy one to pursue, is today in danger of being put into the deep freeze for years to come. What's more, the situation in Ukraine now not only strains relations between Russia and the United States and Europe, it may serve—and is already proving to do so for some—to boost the arguments of those who oppose reducing the role of nuclear weapons in

NATO's security construct. With the geopolitical landscape in turmoil for the foreseeable future, we can also reflect on having squandered a recent period of opportunity for progress on a variety of fronts, including reductions.

It's as sobering a state of affairs as we have faced in decades, with dramatically heightened tensions between Russia and NATO and prospects for the upcoming 2015 NPT Review Conference about as bleak as can be. Progress on disarmament has been painfully slow, in turn limiting prospects for greater controls on proliferation as non-nuclear weapon states increasingly view the NPT as inequitable. It's inevitable that they would question why they should have to live by strict controls when nuclear weapon states carry on without working to fulfill their part of the bargain. Meanwhile, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence not only persists but may be gaining traction.

At the same time, while prospects for progress may seem hopeless today, it's important to remember that we will not always be in this moment. As the situation in Ukraine has demonstrated so clearly, the global security landscape can change unexpectedly and almost overnight. Fortunately, history has shown us that it also can change for the better. We can—and we must—work toward the day when it will change to favor our work and the work predicated by the NPT.

In the meantime, I believe it is possible to take some meaningful steps, to develop ideas and engage in work that can prepare us for that time – and I also believe NATO can and should play an important role. Let me offer some examples of areas where we can work to make progress.

If we are ever to return to meaningful engagement on weapons reduction, we must address long-term security in the Euro-Atlantic region. That security today is jeopardized by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine – a crisis that has spawned debates over the appropriate level of sanctions against Russia, over whether the West should arm Ukrainian soldiers and over whether there's any hope that a cease-fire agreement can hold even until the ink dries.

I prefer to take a longer view – and I believe there's a course that holds the promise of sustained progress to help secure a peaceful post-Cold War future.

Two years ago, former Senator Sam Nunn, who was for a long time chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and I, along with more than 30 other senior political, military and security experts from across the Euro-Atlantic region, issued a report—*Building Mutual Security in the Euro-Atlantic Region*—warning that a new Euro-Atlantic military and political strategy was needed to prevent conflict and combat mutual distrust. Today, as the region faces its greatest crisis in decades, we are promoting a plan to build a new security architecture for the Euro-Atlantic region. It would begin with the creation of a new Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group, personally mandated by presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, to provide an important public demonstration of government commitment to addressing and resolving core issues – and it would offer a vehicle for translating that resolve into action. The group could include representatives from a core group of states – for example, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine, the

United Kingdom and the United States – as well as representatives from the OSCE, the European Union, the Eurasian Economic Union and NATO.

One way the group could play an early and decisive role would be to define principles of transparency and restraint to reduce the growing risk of encounters between NATO and allied armed forces and those of the Russian Federation. In an alarming recent report, *Dangerous Brinkmanship*, the European Leadership Network catalogued at least 40 near misses between Russian and NATO forces, as well as a number of incidents of aggressive and provocative actions by the Russians since their annexation of Crimea. Those incidents are continuing and have now become a significant factor in the narrative around what the ELN calls the "volatile standoff between a nuclear-armed state and a nuclear-armed alliance and its partners." It is a dangerous situation, indeed, and we must work to ensure it doesn't lead to catastrophe.

I also would like to mention that NTI is engaging a new generation of analysts and problem-solvers on the matter of Euro-Atlantic Security. Working with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the ELN, the Munich Security Conference and the Russian International Affairs Council, we have established a Track II task force of younger generation leaders from Ukraine, Russia, Europe and the United States. The group's first meeting in Sofia last autumn was a great success, and members will convene again in Riga next month to examine the role of civil society to create and sustain peace in the region and to share their ideas about the proposal to create a Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group.

The enthusiasm of those young leaders as well as the tremendous turnout at the Munich Security Conference when we discussed our proposal for a Euro-Atlantic Security Leadership Group tells me that there's a real thirst for dialogue on these issues, particularly among young people. And that gives me some hope for future progress.

Another area with the potential for important progress is on verification. Only a few countries today, particularly the U.S. and Russia, have experience with nuclear disarmament verification, a situation that limits the rest of the world's capacity to meaningfully engage in verifying arms reduction treaties. Imagine—as hard as it may be to do so at the moment—that countries reached agreement tomorrow on a Middle East weapon of mass destruction-free zone. None of the regional actors would have the capacity or the experience to verify it. Solving other regional nuclear challenges, like those in Iran and North Korea, also would be more likely if their neighbors could play a role in verifying any agreements and have confidence in the outcomes.

Because we strongly believe that verification can act as the engine or the brake for arms control – and that without it, new arms reduction efforts will stall – the Nuclear Threat Initiative has done significant work in this area. Last year, we released a ground-breaking report outlining new approaches to verification, and the U.S. State Department is now working with us on an International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification. The inaugural meeting will be held in Washington in just more than two weeks' time, on March 19-20, and we're looking forward to participation from more than 25 countries, including nuclear weapon and non-nuclear weapon states.

With respect to the Middle East, I think we all understand the significance of the failure to follow through on the promise made at the 2010 NPT Review Conference to take meaningful steps toward the establishment of a weapon-free zone. The impact of this failure on next month's Review Conference remains to be seen – but it won't be good.

There are bright spots, however – and they include the young members of the Middle East Next Generation of Arms Control Specialists. I engaged with them in New York during the PrepCom last spring, and they are doing some extraordinary work that I believe can help lay a foundation for the future. The group has members from eight countries in the troubled region, and even as global leaders have failed to deliver on the promise made in 2010, these young people have undertaken some innovative work. That work has included a simulated conference on a WMD-free zone, during which members reached consensus on a final declaration even within the constraints of their respective countries' priorities. Their hard work should serve as a lesson for their elders.

Meanwhile, the Iran negotiations – fraught as they are – continue, amid acrimony over the best way to proceed. As I see it, there are three choices with respect to Iran: Allow them to produce enough highly enriched uranium and develop the technical capacity to build a bomb; go to war to stop them; or make a deal, even an imperfect one. To my mind, we should throw our collective weight behind that third option, and the U.S. Congress should not endeavor to make the difficult process more so. If an agreement can be reached with Iran, perhaps we can move it from being a pariah state to one that could actually help us deal with Syria and the threats posed by DAESH. There's no question that the stakes are tremendously high. If there's no agreement with Iran, we are told by many commentators that we could see Saudi Arabia and Egypt work to develop their own nuclear weapons – and I'm quite certain we can all agree that the last thing the Middle East needs is more weapons, never mind more nuclear weapons.

So the fact that talks continue, even in fits and starts, is a positive development – and one that should give us all some measure of hope for the future of the region.

NATO can and should contribute across all the areas that I have discussed this evening and more. How? By living up to our own rhetoric and further reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in our own defense structure. If NATO supports the arms control, disarmament, nonproliferation agenda – and we say that we do – we can't have it both ways. We can't be a "do as I say, not as I do" organization.

Here are a few options for the Alliance:

- NATO could consider adopting a strong position on the purpose of nuclear weapons. The US and the UK have adopted the position that the "fundamental purpose" of the weapons is political, to deter war. What if the Alliance went beyond that to adopt the "sole purpose" stance?

- What if NATO also provided leadership on removing U.S. weapons from prompt-launch status? That we keep weapons ready to fire is a dangerous vestige of the Cold War and an

area that warrants serious and immediate consideration in an age when many believe that a cyber attack alone could lead to an accidental or unauthorized launch.

I listened carefully to Tom Countryman's contribution to the conference earlier today, when he told us, in effect, that the U.S. had done all that it could in this area. With respect to Tom, who I do respect a lot, I prefer the view of his president, who both campaigned on the removal of weapons from prompt-launch and, during the course of his presidency, recommitted himself to this.

- NATO could press for the removal of land-based tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. These dangerous weapons have no place in a post-Cold War world, and in today's world, rather than offering security, they only pose tremendous risks.

Finally, let's remember that in the Euro-Atlantic area – from Vancouver to Vladivostok – there are 95% of the world's nuclear weapons, and that NATO has three of the five NPT-recognized nuclear weapon states; tactical nuclear weapons based in Europe; nuclear umbrella responsibilities within and beyond the Alliance; partners that broaden the Alliance's reach into the Middle East; and a role, from time-to-time, as the world's police. As such, I believe NATO has a special responsibility to live up to its very own rhetoric on nuclear weapons.

NATO's own website says that "NATO allies engage actively in preventing proliferation of WMD by state and non-state actors through an active political agenda of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as by developing and harmonizing defense capabilities …" We may be doing that in part, but I fear that it is not the perception of NATO.

Instead, we appear to be taking steps that make us more and more and more dependent on the very strategic weapons systems we should be working to reduce. There's no question the path to reducing reliance is difficult, but NATO has a responsibility to face up to both its promise and to the reality of declining defense budgets. In addition to investing too heavily in large strategic weapons, we're not spending the right amount on conventional weapons – but we could do more if we were pooling our resources more effectively. A new ELN report titled "The Wales Pledge Revisited: A Preliminary Analysis of 2015 Budget Decisions in NATO Member States," says burden-sharing is becoming a necessity, not a choice, as NATO countries no longer have the funding or domestic support to fully modernize their militaries and develop their individual defense capabilities.

So, I do believe that NATO has an important role to play and has some important decisions to make. And I believe it's possible to make progress on a number of key nuclear security fronts, despite current global tensions and crises. It is our obligation to continue doing what is possible – to demonstrate leadership ourselves and to continue to press our leaders to act; to take the steps we can take today and to lay the necessary groundwork for future progress for generations to come. Despite the challenges we face, I am ever optimistic about the future, and I trust that your presence here today means that you are as well.

Thank you again for inviting me to speak tonight, and thank you again as well to our hosts. I look forward to our continued discussion.