The guiding motif of this panel is a term called, "New Democratic Diplomacy" -- a new concept, intended to orient our collective, broad-based and participatory efforts in the new millennium and the shaping of its agenda. It must be viewed in the context of the over arching theme of this 53rd Annual DPI/NGO Conference “Global Solidarity: The Way to Peace and International Cooperation”. It may appear that we are today rich with slogans in search of an audience. Yet what counts are the results that words allow humanity to achieve, not the words themselves and this is what I hope we can focus on in this panel.

As Harold Nicholson, Henry Kissinger and other famous writers and practitioners of diplomacy have noted, the role of the diplomat has changed dramatically over the last two hundred years. Much of this change is due to technology. In the days before steamships, the telegraph, the fax machine and e-mail, diplomats abroad were largely on their own to represent their countries as best they could. The advent of new transportation and communications technologies may not have entirely chained foreign diplomats to daily directives from their capitals, but they indisputably strengthened the ability of the foreign ministry to oversee the implementation of policy in the field -- for better or worse, of course, depending on the policy.
Are we now on the verge of a new revolution in diplomacy? Have we moved from the professional improviser, past the stage of the glorified mailman or delivery boy, to a new level of development of the profession of diplomacy? If so, what is the nature of this new revolution? What specifically will this mean for facing up to the most urgent challenges confronting all humankind?

Diplomacy is certainly ceasing to be a profession practised by an elite group. Both globalization and the revolution in information technology have made it possible for new players to enter the field. As we all know from history, revolutions have a way of carrying on certain features of previous ages -- there will always be a certain element of improvisation in the conduct of diplomacy, and a certain role for the passive transmission of messages and *pro forma* representational functions. The revolution we are facing now in the field of diplomacy, however, stems from the rise of civil society not just as a source of leaders, but as something much more profound. It has become a foundation of policy, an independent source of knowledge for leaders, a potentially powerful tool of leaders, a medium for the conduct of diplomacy, and, above all, a potent force for public accountability.

No one – not even its honest opponents -- can look at the success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines without a sense of awe and admiration. The ICBL's ingenious formula of high motivation, transnational networking, electronic communications, and understanding of the media won it a Nobel Peace Prize. I sometimes wonder if this award is more deserved for what it accomplished in the field of landmines, or for the light it shone upon what an informed people can accomplish even in the difficult and complex field of national security policy.

The campaign to establish an International Criminal Court is another victory for the peoples of the United Nations. The Mine Ban Convention and the ICC -- while not yet fully universal in scope -- will surely not be the last of the great achievements by civil society in the field of international peace and security.

There is a danger, of course, that the formula may be abused. High motivation, networking, electronic communications, and mastery of the media are all multi-purpose tools. They may be used for good or bad. Great tyrants in recent history have used them for purposes that have little to do with the values of the UN Charter. Diplomacy must be responsive to the popular will, yet it must also be able to advance the long-term interests of a people even in the face of contemporary opposition. Fads should not govern the content or conduct of national diplomacy. Agreements reached as a result of grassroots driven diplomacy must also go through the painstaking process of negotiating meticulous detail. There can be no instant treaties especially in the highly sensitive area of national security. We need therefore to keep in mind two indispensable features of global treaties -- durability and universality. For this a strategic partnership between civil
society and sovereign nation states is indispensable.

Last May, 141 NGOs and research institutes gathered at the UN on the occasion of the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. They attended plenary meetings, were given access to the relevant documentation, and on 3 May had an unprecedented opportunity to deliver fifteen presentations to participating delegations, including a speech by Mr. Iccho Itoh, the current mayor of Nagasaki, honouring the city where 55 years ago a nuclear weapon was actually used. Invidious distinctions continue to exist such as through rules of procedure, in the role civil society plays in UN gatherings devoted to human rights, development, the environment and disarmament. And even within the disarmament area what some member states are ready to accept by way of NGO participation in the small arms area is not what they will tolerate in the nuclear disarmament area. For other member states an NGO role in nuclear disarmament is welcome but not so in small arms. Though there are some difficulties to resolve about more active participation by civil society at these conferences, I am pleased at the progress that has been made and will work to pursue some possible improvements in the future.

The vital importance of civil society to the future of disarmament has also been stressed recently by the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, which has identified disarmament education as a key priority. The Global Campaign for Peace Education launched at the Hague Appeal Conference in May last year had the slogan -- No peace without peace education. I believe the same applies to disarmament. Genuine progress in achieving disarmament goals -- including the elimination of nuclear, chemical, biological weapons as well as reducing stocks of conventional arms especially small arms -- absolutely must rest upon a solid foundation of an informed public.

This applies of course not only to the public in advanced developed countries but disarmament education on a global scale. As a citizen of a developing country, I am especially aware, for example, that very few of the over 2,000 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information are based in developing countries. Notwithstanding the “digital divide”, the internet offers some hope that vast amounts of new information may now be more easily accessible to remote locations around the world. So the same forces of technology that are revolutionizing diplomacy are also increasingly available to revolutionize inter-continental communication within the NGO community.

One of the greatest hurdles in any effort to make the process of disarmament more truly democratic is the unreadiness of governments to provide relevant information, including even the total number of nuclear weapons in the world -- ostensibly for national security reasons. Attempts to improve transparency will require persistent and vigorous efforts by and on behalf of civil society. Technology cannot solve this problem, but it can help. In the field of disarmament,
additional knowledge is now available from commercial sources -- such as high-grade satellite imagery -- that can finally give the general public tangible, visual representations of persisting weapons threats around the world. Civil society has begun to use this tool effectively.

“New democratic diplomacy” also connotes the existence of a strategy -- a vision of clear objectives and careful thought to the tactics of implementation. Participants in democratic political systems need, in this respect, to act diplomatically. They need clear goals. They need carefully-coordinated tactics. They need allies. They need to know who their opponents are, as well as what arguments and interests they are representing. They need to engage internationally, yet always maintain a firm foundation of political support at home. The conduct of diplomacy must be rooted in democratic origins and reflect popular will.

One area that will be particularly valuable for initiatives -- concerns the environment. On 7 August 2000, the US National Academy of Sciences released an alarming study revealing that 109 of the nearly 150 contaminated sites in the US nuclear weapons programme will never again be clean enough for unrestricted use. One can only wonder what these numbers would look like for all the other countries that continue to see nuclear weapons as an essential basis of their national security. The truth is, of course, that these weapons leave a horrible, lasting legacy even if they are not used. The legacies of actual nuclear war are too horrible to contemplate but its possibility will always remain with us as long as we have nuclear weapons.

This and other related studies, such as those dealing with human radiation experiments, are important for the public to see. They also provide a significant opportunity for cross-cutting alliances between NGOs in a variety of sectors. This will strengthen civil society. The disarmament groups, to be more precise, must do more to build bridges to environmental groups, and human rights groups. The burden of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction simply cannot fall solely upon the backs of the dedicated but under-funded members of the disarmament movement. Support from educators, scientists, professional societies, and potentially even certain sectors of private industry must be integrated into the collective effort. Disarmament must, in short, arise as an enlightened demand from within society, not be imposed upon it from without. That, in its essence, is sustainable disarmament.

These are the goals I would urge you to strive for as you continue your efforts in pursuit of a more just and peaceful world. You have my deepest admiration for the significant progress you have already made in this noble effort, and my pledge to help you in any way I can to bring to fulfillment the purposes and objectives we share together.