I would like first of all to express my pleasure in addressing this important gathering. It is fitting that this event should be held at the United Nations, since nuclear disarmament is in all senses of the word a truly global challenge, one demanding the energies and talents of the world's truly universal organization, its member states, and concerned groups in civil society.

I salute in particular the distinguished Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative, Senator Douglas Roche, whom I have known and respected for very many years. He is a fitting leader for this initiative.

On the cover of MPI's annual report for the year 2000, there is a photograph of a bridge -- which, for many reasons, is an apt symbol for the present and future roles of MPI. The Initiative seeks to erect a bridge between solemn words and concrete deeds. It seeks to ensure a stable pathway between theory and practice. It seeks to bridge differences between governments,
while promoting increased cooperation between civil society and governments that support disarmament goals. In so doing, its participants also recognize that the pedestrians who will use this bridge are ultimately the people of the world, for they will be the true beneficiaries of the success of the MPI effort.

In recognizing the need for bridge-building, MPI is also acknowledging that specific ends are not achieved by any "hidden hand" of history or some inexorable incremental process that we are told to trust. There is nothing deterministic about either the triumph or the failure of the project for global nuclear disarmament.

Quite the contrary -- both the prospects for success and hopes for minimizing the risks of failure will be shaped by individual and collective human efforts. Leaders and citizens everywhere must now work together to ensure that the extraordinary powers of the human imagination that led to the production of these terrible weapons will in the future focus upon the challenge of completing their total elimination through delegitimisation.

It is always somewhat of a mystery in human affairs when one encounters intractable obstacles to the fulfilment of common sense propositions. As Winston Churchill once wrote, "Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most times he will pick himself up and carry on." It should not, therefore, be surprising that the enormous security, economic, and environmental benefits of global nuclear disarmament would be received in some sectors with blind eyes, deaf ears, and studied inaction.

Perpetual nuclear armament is a progressively lethal virus in the global body politic. It thrives in a growth environment of unthinking habit, institutional inertia, unbridled nationalism, mutual suspicion, special economic interests, confusion or apathy on the part of the news media, and even a disturbing lassitude among academic experts.

In overcoming these formidable challenges, MPI must also build bridges between idealism and self-interest. It must recognise that while compromises over means are possible, the fundamental end of global nuclear disarmament is not itself a subject for negotiation or selective application. If it becomes apparent that existing means are failing to achieve this desired end, then the people and their representatives should indeed explore new means to get the job done. The mere presence of opposition, however, is not itself a sufficient reason to abandon internationally-agreed means.

In some countries, "thirteen" is an unlucky number. This does not, however, provide any grounds for one to assume a dismal future for the 13 "practical steps" toward global nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Let us be clear about the function of these steps: they exist for purposes of public accountability. If words alone were sufficient to guarantee the achievement of global nuclear disarmament, there would have been no need to have any such official steps.
The challenge ahead for the disarmament community is to see these steps through to their full implementation. This will not be easy, since there is a risk -- if not a likelihood -- that some countries may attempt to exploit ambiguities in the drafting of these steps to escape accountability.

We must recall that nuclear disarmament has been on the UN agenda since January 1946. Yet today, over a half-century later, over 30,000 nuclear weapons reportedly remain in existence despite many solemn legal and diplomatic commitments to eliminate them. With this blemished track record before them, the people of the world are quite justified in their demand for concrete indicators for assessing progress in achieving this goal. These benchmarks offer a litmus test to measure the readiness of the states that possess such arms to live up to their disarmament commitments.

The fact that -- by many preliminary indications -- the wrong colours are appearing in early applications of this litmus test, should neither surprise nor dishearten. The way to a world free of nuclear weapons will more likely resemble a winding, unpaved road than a super-highway. Nobody ever intended the 13 points to be sacred scripture, immutable in time or inflexible in implementation. If certain states are ignoring these specific navigation points, the people of the world will rightfully demand an explanation in a variety of international forums, particularly in the NPT's strengthened review process. The possibility will therefore remain open that any one or several of these points may have to be either further clarified or supplemented by additional points.

Though it was not one of the original 13 steps, there are many who consider the Secretary-General's proposal for a major international conference to eliminate nuclear dangers as a viable option to pursue, especially if a gap persists between the words and deeds of global nuclear disarmament. Once again, it is the behaviour of states relative to their commitments that will determine the need to explore new paths to global nuclear disarmament.

At present, prospects for near-term entry into force of the CTBT remain rather bleak, despite the impressive fact that 160 states have signed the treaty and 76 have ratified it, including 31 of the 44 states whose ratification is specifically required for the treaty to become effective. It is troubling that many, if not all, of these remaining 13 "hold-out" states have for years voiced their support for global nuclear disarmament. It is also of particular concern that the treaty continues to face serious obstacles to ratification by the United States -- the country that worked hard and long to conclude such a treaty. These obstacles persist despite the efforts of General Shalikashvili and a coalition of NGOs seeking to reverse the 1999 decision of the Senate.

Just as universal adherence to the CTBT remains far from an established fact, so too does the NPT face considerable obstacles in becoming fully universal in membership. This is particularly troubling in South Asia and the Middle East, where significant nuclear weapons capabilities are combined with stockpiles of long-range missiles in countries that remain outside this treaty. The fact that certain of these countries may have derived -- or may yet reap -- substantial material or
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prestige benefits from the possession of nuclear weapons, despite their non-membership in this
treaty, may create a "demonstration effect" enticing other countries to follow suit. In addition, the
fact that some of this new assistance includes nuclear goods and technology also contrasts with
the global norm of full-scope IAEA safeguards -- a norm reaffirmed both in the 1995 NPT
Decision on "Principles and Objectives" and in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review
Conference.

The nuclear tests in South Asia in 1998 have in particular led to a kind of "engagement race" by
many outside countries that appears motivated more by expedient economic or diplomatic
considerations than anything at all having to do with the terms for global nuclear disarmament
and non-proliferation as set out in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Another goal of the 13 steps was to re-energize the Conference on Disarmament. This effort
refers specifically to the negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for
nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and also to the need to establish an
appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. Yet there has
been very little progress in the CD so far this year on these issues or on measures needed to
prevent an arms race in outer space.

It is of course impossible to predict what steps some nuclear-weapons states will take in the
future with respect to their own nuclear policies. We have all seen the various news reports
about the possibilities that may exist for future unilateral reductions of nuclear stockpiles. While
welcome as a positive step forward in fulfilling one goal of the 13 steps addressing unilateral
measures, such steps however may in themselves offer very little by way of transparency or
irreversibility -- two additional important goals of the 13 steps. Similarly, the world community
would be justified in seeking to ensure that any future moves to de-alert or de-activate nuclear
weapons will be both permanent and verifiable.

Treaties, while often difficult to negotiate -- especially in such sensitive areas of national and
international security -- do offer the benefit of establishing binding legal obligations. Hence, the
goals of the 13 steps concerning the START II and III treaties and the ABM Treaty must not be
cast aside in deference to unverifiable, unilateral declarations.

It is strange indeed to see this apparent aversion to the rule of law in a field where states should
logically require the most binding of all possible assurances of compliance and verification. After
a half century of nuclear disarmament efforts, the world community is justified in demanding
something more substantial than new declaratory statements, however welcome they may be as
symbols of progress in this difficult field. This is as true in the area of disarmament as it is, for
example, in trade, environment, and human rights.

Other warning signs also deserve close attention. Rumours persist that some countries that
possess nuclear weapons are either considering -- or are actively developing -- new nuclear
weapons capabilities. Such a development would, to say the least, appear in sharp contrast to
the "diminishing role for nuclear weapons" envisaged in the 13 steps, not to mention the "unequivocal undertaking" made by the nuclear-weapon states to global nuclear disarmament. Questions of research and development, as well as issues relating to deployment and doctrines, remain extremely important for governments and civil society to monitor closely in the years ahead.

So what are we conclude from the present state of affairs? Is this a time for despair? Is it a time for frustrated nation-states to yield to the vortex pulling them toward global nuclear anarchy? Must the security of our children and future generations rest upon the willingness or -- given command and control problems -- even the basic capability of states not to launch a nuclear war against which there is no assured defence? Are declaratory statements and a consensus on paper to be discounted in favour of more radical measures, including moves to amend the NPT, threats to leave the treaty, or efforts to seek a fresh advisory opinion from the ICJ?

Ladies and gentlemen, the gravity of these questions only serves to highlight a broader concern. It is both ironic and tragic that as the process of "globalization" continues its inexorable course, the world community has still not developed a global security concept to ensure that this process does not lead to a global catastrophe. At present, the global security interest still amounts to little more than the sum of the particular security interests of individual states. Somehow we must all work to ensure that global values are integrated into national laws and policies, particularly with respect to those activities by states that potentially jeopardize life on this planet.

There is therefore a vital need for all countries to re-dedicate themselves to the pursuit of global nuclear disarmament, for therein lies the path of security for all. Let us recall perhaps the most important sentence of all in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, where the participants reaffirmed that "the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." This is a guarantee that neither of the two alternative security concepts -- nuclear deterrence or missile defence -- can match. So let us re-affirm today our collective determination to ensure that global nuclear disarmament commitments will be honoured, a task that will require both enlightened leadership and an informed citizenry.

There is a particular need for civil society to recapture the activism it knew in decades past. All citizens, NGOs, and potentially influential professions -- especially nuclear scientists, doctors, lawyers, scholars, journalists, environmentalists, and religious leaders -- all have important contributions to make in strengthening societal resistance to nuclear weapons. An informed and active public is ultimately the best possible guarantee that disarmament commitments will result in disarmament results.

I urge you today to use your vast experience, your imagination, and all the courage you can summon to persist in your noble efforts to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous, and secure world without nuclear weapons. You have my very best wishes as you prepare to undertake the challenging work that lies ahead.