I wish to commend Ambassador Asmady and his staff at the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations for organizing this brainstorming session on the challenge of breaking the stalemate between disarmament and non-proliferation. Needless to say, I am very much interested in any ideas to achieve this very worthy goal, and I have a few suggestions of my own that I would like to share with you today.

The word, “stalemate”, is a very apt term for this session. The Oxford Dictionary defines this term in conjunction with the game of chess – it means “… a position counting as a draw, in which a player is not in check but can only move into check.” I scarcely need to dwell on the abundant evidence that exists of the stalemate we are now facing in the field of disarmament, for in various ways, its signs appear virtually throughout the institutions comprising the UN disarmament machinery.

Many years ago, during the Cold War, the superpowers found themselves in another stalemate – called “mutual assured destruction” – a situation that some said was akin to
“two scorpions in a bottle”, each deadly but unable to strike for fear of a fatal response.

The stalemate in our disarmament machinery today fortunately bears little resemblance to the dark days of the Cold War. Yet the great eras of history are seldom separated by clear boundaries, and I very much worry that we are finding ourselves, once again, locked in a tragically misguided debate between diehard proponents of disarmament and indefatigable champions of non-proliferation. If this continues, I fear we will all find ourselves playing out, once again, the roles of two scorpions -- in a new bottle.

What a tragic outcome that would be, because disarmament and non-proliferation are perfectly compatible and mutually reinforcing goals. I cannot imagine that we will ever see much progress on global nuclear disarmament if additional states continue to pursue and to acquire nuclear weapons – such acquisition is patently contrary to the goal of disarmament. Non-proliferation is clearly a necessary condition for achieving global nuclear disarmament.

Yet non-proliferation is not alone sufficient to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The pursuit of non-proliferation in parallel with actions that include policies for maintaining nuclear stockpiles for decades to come -- coupled with the development of new types of warheads and delivery systems, and the lack of active planning for security in a world without nuclear weapons – all of these scarcely offer a climate that is conducive to real progress in non-proliferation. Such actions give rise to the familiar accusations of double standards and bad faith through non-compliance with disarmament commitments. Frankly, I find such views difficult to refute.

The way forward out of this stalemate is to change the game from one of victors and losers, to one of mutual gain – or a “positive sum game” where all players benefit. Though it has become somewhat fashionable to be pessimistic about the future of disarmament, I see many encouraging signs that may offer a foundation for significant progress in the years ahead. I was impressed that the international Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction, chaired by Hans Blix, was able to issue a consensus report last year identifying numerous specific steps needed to advance both disarmament and non-proliferation goals. I am sure that everybody here is familiar with the op-ed by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn in the Wall Street Journal last January, which argued along similar lines. The very first sentence of their commentary said the world is facing an “historic opportunity” – indeed, their strong endorsement of concrete steps toward nuclear disarmament shows clearly that strong support for the elimination of nuclear weapons is by no means limited to the longtime advocates of disarmament.

Speaking last June at the Carnegie Endowment, former British foreign minister Margaret Beckett added her own support for this historic goal. She stated that the chances for achieving “continued momentum and consensus on non-proliferation” would be greatly increased if there were also a “genuine commitment and concrete action on nuclear disarmament.” Clearly, we need to go beyond what former Secretary-General Kofi
Annan once called the “mutually assured paralysis” produced by the sterile debate between proponents of disarmament and non-proliferation. In his proposal last February to create a new Office for Disarmament Affairs, Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon also described disarmament and non-proliferation as “inextricably linked, and neither can advance without the other” – he has vowed to revitalize the work of the United Nations in pursuing both of these complementary objectives. I very much look forward to assisting him in pursuing this enlightened common purpose.

I say, “common purpose” because I believe this points to one of the gravest obstacles ahead – namely, the erosion of a broad international consensus on the most fundamental goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. I believe all can agree that neither disarmament nor non-proliferation is an end in itself. Together, they offer an indispensable means to strengthen international peace and security and to achieve general and complete disarmament. There are clearly no guarantees of peace and security in a world armed with weapons of mass destruction – or countries or groups seeking them. The challenge ahead is not simply to keep such weapons from “falling into the wrong hands” – let us be clear: such weapons belong in no one’s hands.

I have worked for many years on disarmament issues at the United Nations and this is not the first time I have encountered a deadlock and pessimistic forecasts. The Charter itself offers some guidance as to the path ahead for the UN. Its preamble states very clearly that one of the UN’s fundamental purposes is to be “a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations” in achieving their “common ends”. While states can undertake many constructive initiatives unilaterally, bilaterally, plurilaterally, and regionally – global challenges like nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation require sustained, multilateral cooperation involving all countries. Given that the goal of this particular brainstorming session is to provide some recommendations for consideration by the NAM in preparing for future disarmament meetings, including the next session of the General Assembly, here are some common sense suggestions I can offer –

- Encourage heads of state and government to include disarmament and non-proliferation themes in their plenary statements at the General Assembly, and to place such issues on the agenda of bilateral meetings with states that possess or that may be seeking to acquire any type of weapon of mass destruction. Move these issues from the back stage to center stage.

- Welcome and encourage support from civil society and expanded coverage by the media, for an educated public is the strongest foundation for future progress in these areas.

- Stress approaches that focus on the “rule of law” -- including the importance of compliance with existing treaty commitments, the need for universal membership in the relevant multilateral treaties, the need to bring certain treaties into force (notably the CTBT and the Pelindaba Treaty), the need for new treaties (including those dealing with fissile materials, space weapons, missiles, and conventional arms reductions), and the importance of starting the process of negotiating a nuclear weapons convention.

I believe that we will all stand a greater chance of achieving the great goals of disarmament and non-proliferation if we begin with agreement on common ends and
proceed to identify the specific steps needed to achieve them. The alternative approach, based on the narrow pursuit of tactical national advantages, will truly result in a lose/lose outcome – namely, the failure to achieve *either* multilateral or national goals. As High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, let me say that my mind, my eyes, and even my office door – are all open to receive new ideas on how the United Nations can better serve its member states and the peoples of the world in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. I know I will benefit from your own advice and suggestions, and I wish you a very productive session this weekend.