Introductory Remarks

By

Angela Kane
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Panel on Global Security Challenges – National Security, Asymmetric Threats
2012 Blouin Creative Leadership Summit
21 September 2012

As at past Blouin Creative Leadership Summits, the world finds itself once again at a familiar crossroad. And as before, the roads ahead go in different directions, but their names all begin with the syllable, “in-”.

The first road is “instability” and we see it in daily headlines about impending and actual financial collapses, violent demonstrations throughout the Middle East, arms races underway in at least three regions, maritime territorial disputes, and a chronic stalemate in multilateral efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and to limit conventional arms.

The second road actually has two names: “innovation” and “interdependence”. Responses to weapons threats have been accompanied by innovations in verification and safeguards technologies, such as the ability to detect nuclear explosions in any environment. And as people communicate more, travel more, invest more abroad, purchase more from other countries, they develop a common interest in avoiding war. This is something on which to build.

I believe nuclear weapons pose the gravest threats to humanity—and hence stability—because of the massive and indiscriminate effects from the use of even one such device. Non-proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts are important, but they will not be sufficient to prevent another such use. A real solution will require a successful process of disarmament.

This will require concrete deeds—in particular, deeds rooted in domestic laws, policies, and institutions. There will be hope for eliminating weapons of mass destruction as soon as agreed multilateral norms covering such weapons are fully integrated into government structures and embraced as national priorities. This does not mean the end of the nation-state—but it will require rehabilitating the ends of the nation-state.

Once this challenge is met—and domestic goals and policies are brought into line with international commitments and norms—many of the most intractable problems in international organization will disappear. Here is where I hope to see the greatest innovation in the years ahead—in bringing back into alignment domestic and global laws, policies, and priorities. This is the interdependence we most need right now—the interdependence of the global and the local.