Passing the Torch: 
Some Remarks to the Next Generation of Nuclear Specialists

By

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Reception
Hosted by the International Network of Emerging Nuclear Specialists (INENS)
Palais des Nations
Geneva, Switzerland
25 April 2013
I am honoured to be your special guest at this reception, and wish to thank your Executive Director, Meena Singelee, for inviting me to say a few words on this occasion.

We are meeting as the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference opens its new session. I cannot imagine a more appropriate time and place to hold a gathering of the International Network of Emerging Nuclear Specialists (INENS).

After all, here we are in the city of Geneva, where so many of the world’s multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements were negotiated. We are in a city that takes great pride in the importance of individual initiative and the contributions of each human being in working for a better world.

As Voltaire—this city’s ancestor—once put it, “We must cultivate our garden.”

Even the motto of this city points to the future and suggests that it is a better place than our world today. That motto is: *Post tenebras lux*—Light after Darkness.

We all know that there is a long agenda of unfinished business in the nuclear field—a domain that encompasses nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, nuclear security, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. And because none of these great causes is easy to achieve, there is a compelling need to cultivate a professional community that can share the burdens of achieving these goals—and sustain this effort over many years.

The political, economic, and technical complexity of the challenges in these fields requires the members of this community to have a wide variety of skills. You are united, yet each of you brings your own assets to the table. Some of you are physicists, some are activists—and indeed some of you are activist physicists! Some work in industry. Some are practicing scientists. But all of you know that your causes are noble.

It is indisputable that the challenges in these fields require collaboration among many professional disciplines. When the last nuclear weapon is dismantled and a nuclear-weapon-free age finally begins, the credit will not likely go to a single scientist—of the natural or political variety—but to the collective efforts of humanity and those who have helped to lead it to this great destiny.

This is why the principles, norms, values, objectives, and skills of our next generation are so important, for they are ones who will carry the heavy torch of responsibility for achieving the ambitious goals of the NPT and other multilateral treaties in the nuclear field.

Many of you will have your own roles to play in shaping the outcomes of future meetings in the NPT review process. Some here today will one day be representing your country at such gatherings. Some will be providing guidance from your capitals to your
delegations in Geneva or New York. Others will be producing studies, lobbying delegations for non-governmental organizations, or designing specific initiatives for enhancing verification and transparency under the treaty.

You then, all of you, will have significant roles to play in making the NPT review process work by doing all you can to ensure that the policies and practices of States are fully consistent with their commitments. This combination of substantive expertise and a dedicated commitment to a great cause is the quality that enables individuals, groups, States, and regional and global institutions to move the world.

There is another dimension that I would like to touch upon today as a tribute to this notion of having global network of emerging nuclear specialists. What you are creating is not simply a group of experts. You are creating something deeper—a real community of professionals sharing common concerns, goals, needs, and perceptions of the challenges ahead.

Many of you have even become—or will become—friends, and this is a highly under-rated phenomenon in our business. Friendships are enormously important in building mutual trust and confidence across both borders and professions, and progress in disarmament and non-proliferation relies more than we all may think upon recognition of our shared humanity.

So I wish you all well on your professional careers. May your network expand and may you soon see the fruits of your cooperation and, yes, your friendships.

What more can one ask of a life of public service? I am proud of what you are doing, and I wish you the very best in all your work.