THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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MESSAGE TO THE TURTLE BAY ROUNDTABLE ON PROLIFERATION CHALLENGES IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD
New York, 18 January 2013
Delivered by Ms. Angela Kane
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

I thank the Permanent Missions of Japan, Poland and Turkey for hosting this timely Roundtable on proliferation challenges in a globalized world.

This subject is especially worthy of the attention of all Member States, and indeed the public, because proliferation challenges are themselves proliferating.

As you well know, the UN Charter addresses the “regulation of armaments”, and the General Assembly has adopted many resolutions on this subject going back to 1946.

Unfortunately, the international legal regime for regulating conventional arms remains an aspiration, and levels of military expenditure remain high and continue to grow. This disgraceful track record must change.

This year, the world community will have the opportunity to conclude an Arms Trade Treaty. Though long overdue, a successful outcome will be a welcome step forward in establishing legal norms to regulate transfers of conventional arms.

We had a successful Second Review Conference last year on the Programme of Action to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Yet we have still not crossed the bridge between political commitments and legal obligations in this field.

The urgent need for progress in the “regulation of armaments” is apparent in the hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by armed violence and conflict throughout the world.

The human costs of this bloodshed are not registered in fatality statistics alone. They extend to the huge social and economic opportunity costs. We are fortunate that this violence has not escalated to the use of weapons of mass destruction.
By its resolution 1540, the Security Council affirmed that the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and their means of delivery, to non-State actors constitutes a threat to international peace and security. In the eight years following its adoption, the resolution has established an effective programme of national and international actions to counter this threat, even as globalization continues to expand access to technology and materials to produce the deadliest of weapons.

The objectives of nuclear disarmament and a world free of all weapons of mass destruction will require concerted efforts aimed at preventing non-State actors from gaining access to these weapons. In implementing resolution 1540, Member States, in partnership with the United Nations and other international organizations, have been raising the non-proliferation barriers by ensuring that the objectives of the resolution are translated into tangible results that increase our collective security.

In addition to the 1540 Committee, the Security Council has established other committees that address non-proliferation. These monitor the implementation of sanctions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

It is increasingly apparent in the work of these committees that globalization – despite its many social and economic benefits – has created new challenges for the achievement of non-proliferation and disarmament goals.

Global spending on nuclear weapons continues to grow, despite declared reductions in the total number of deployed weapons. Key beneficiaries of this spending include both public and private military-industrial interests. The development of strategic systems in one country leads to reciprocal developments in others in a vicious cycle leading only to the greater insecurity of all.

Nuclear weapons have become not just the business of governments. They have bolstered the bottom line of big businesses, especially in times of fiscal austerity.

Increased spending on such weapons strengthens domestic constituencies for these weapons even as their perceived military utility has decreased. It also invites additional states to acquire such weapons for similar purposes of deterrence or for reasons of status or prestige.

The world community can and must do better in addressing all these challenges. I hope that the results of this timely Roundtable will point the way to new progress in the years ahead.