

## **Media Summary**

*Dr. Hans Blix in Melbourne, Australia, August 2007*

### **Bio in brief – Dr. Hans Blix**

Dr. Hans Blix is a former Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs (1978-79). He served as Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1981 to 1997 and as Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) from 2000 to 2003. Since 2004, he has chaired the independent international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC), which presented its Report, *Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms*, in June 2006, and since 2006 he is the president of the World Federation of United Nations Associations. In November 2007, Dr. Blix will return to Australia to receive the Sydney Peace Price.

### **The UN and the World Federation of UN Associations**

As we look at the UN and try to figure out where it is going, it might be a good idea to look at where it is coming from and how it has developed.

“Eight years ago, I was in Melbourne to take part in the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Hague Peace Conference that took place in 1899. We may sometimes feel depressed about limitations resulting from the UN Charter or the machinery of the UN. When we look back at the aims and achievements of 1899, however, we may be surprised and encouraged to see how much progress has been made.”

The UN Charter and its article 2:4, for the first time in the history of mankind, prohibited members to use force or the threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Only two exceptions were stipulated: 1) self defence against an armed attack; and 2) actions sanctioned by the Security Council if it decided that there had been a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or aggression. The International Court of Justice, judicial bodies for Human Rights, important developments of international humanitarian, and the creation of an International Criminal Court, are some examples of groundbreaking achievements of the United Nations. In addition to the work to promote peace and protect the rights of the individual, the UN has taken on issues such as the protection of our environment and the Millennium Declaration, from September 2000, sets an ambitious agenda aimed at eradicating extreme poverty.

There have been intense reform efforts within the UN during the last few years. They have brought some welcome innovations, such as the Peace Building Commission, the new Human Rights Council, and some important management reforms. Yet, friends of the UN must continue to examine how effectiveness can be improved.

“Civil society involvement in efforts to reform and further develop the United Nations is essential to realize the famous first words of the Charter: *‘We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.’* No civil

organization is more closely wedded to and supportive of the UN than the United Nations Associations and the World Federation of UNAs.”

There is a tendency among Member States to blame the UN for failures in international processes.

“Friends of the UN will need to need to explain that the UN is like a large orchestra, with many musicians and instruments. It is possible that some instrument does not work well. The strings of an instrument – like the mandate of some commission – might need to be changed. However, the failure to make harmonious music may more often be caused by an inability or unwillingness of the musicians to play by the same tune. And if the lead violinist does not want to play at all, one should not be surprised at the absence of music.”

No country alone can successfully take on issues like the deteriorating state of our global environment, climate change, HIV/AIDS, poverty, the protection of Human Rights, or the fight against international organized crime and terrorism. Increased cooperation and multilateral solutions are indispensable to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

“Let me cite a fellow Swede, former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who said that the UN is not there to take us to heaven, but to help us avoid going to hell.”

### **The Rule of International Law and Disarmament**

At the end of the Cold War there was a window of opportunity for the world to create a new collective security order. In 1991, after decades of blockages in the Security Council, the Council authorized an armed intervention to stop the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. In the same period time Russia and the United States took steps to reduce the number of deployed non-strategic nuclear weapons through presidential initiatives; the Chemical Weapons Convention was adopted in 1993; the Non-Proliferation Treaty was prolonged indefinitely after renewed commitments by nuclear weapon states to take get serious about disarmament; a Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was negotiated and adopted in 1996; at the Review conference of the NPT in 2000, States Parties agreed on ‘thirteen practical steps’ to disarmament.

“But the window soon closed. The US embarked on a path of unilateralism – the UN, international law and disarmament was out. In 2003, the UN Security Council was said to be irrelevant if it did not agree with the United States and its Coalition of Willing States.”

The **US National Defence Strategy of 2005** seemed to perceive the UN and international law largely as obstacles put on par with terrorism: *“Our strength as a nation will continue to be challenged by those who employ a strategy of the weak using international fora, judicial processes and terrorism.”*

By the middle of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, US confidence and trust in international negotiations, particularly dealing with disarmament issues, was at a record low. And tensions continue to grow. Instead of negotiations towards disarmament, as stipulated in the NPT, nuclear weapon states are renewing and modernizing their

nuclear arsenals. In 2006, North Korea tested a nuclear device, showing the world that it had the capacity to build a bomb. In the wake of a US decision to place components of its missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic, Russia declared its withdrawal from Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFR). China has demonstrated its space-war capabilities by shooting down one of its own weather satellites in space.

This development is worrying, and somewhat paradoxical. At a time when there were no longer any ideological differences between the major powers, when the economic and political interdependence between states and regions reached new heights, and when the revolution in information technology brought the world into the living room of billions of people, we ought to be able to agree on steps to restrain our capacity for war and destruction.

So, where to we go from here?

There is some movement indicating that key actors may be moving back to multilateral approaches and diplomacy. The failure and vast human cost of the military adventures in Iraq and Lebanon may have demonstrated the limitations of military strategies to achieve foreign policy objectives. The shift in strategy towards North Korea in negotiations over its nuclear program, and the resumption of the Six-Party Talks is encouraging. Waving a big stick may indeed be counterproductive. An alternative path, containing suitable carrots, need to be offered. It remains to be seen if this approach will be taken also in the case of Iran.

“For the last few years I have chaired the independent international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, with fourteen experts from different parts of the world. In June 2006, I presented our report, *Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear Biological and Chemical Arms*. We made 60 recommendations on how to revive disarmament and restore the confidence in the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We built on previous efforts and experiences, such as the Canberra Commission.”

The Commission urged all states parties to return to the fundamental undertakings made under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The treaty is based on a double bargain: *the non-nuclear weapon states committed themselves not to develop nuclear weapons; and the nuclear weapon states committed themselves to negotiate towards disarmament*. The issue of non-proliferation is therefore also an issue of disarmament – of existing arsenals.

“So long as the nuclear weapon states maintain that they need nuclear weapons for their national security – why shouldn’t others?”

The WMDC further concluded that one of the most important ways to curb weapons proliferation is working to avoid that states feel a need to go for nuclear weapons. This approach was also taken by the European Union in its WMD-strategy from 2003, and it was endorsed in the much cited Wall Street Journal article, “Nuclear Madness”, by former Secretaries of State Kissinger and Schultz, former Secretary of Defence Perry, and former Senator Nunn, in January this year.

The cooperative approach needs to be complemented by the entry into force of the CTBT, a cut-off treaty on the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, and effective safeguards and international verification – to prevent states as well as non-state actors from acquiring nuclear weapon capabilities.

The full report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission can be found at [www.wmdcommissison.org](http://www.wmdcommissison.org), and queries can be directed to [secretariat@wmdcommission.org](mailto:secretariat@wmdcommission.org).

Hopefully, the window of opportunity is not yet shut. There may still be time wake up and turn back to cooperative solutions to contemporary security challenges. The new generation of political leaders has an unprecedented opportunity to achieve peace through cooperation. We do not have the threat of war between the major military powers hanging over our heads. The European Union has made a war between European nations unthinkable – after millennia of conflicts. An outbreak of wars between Latin American states also seems unlikely. Admittedly, there are flashpoints that need to be dealt with constructively – such as Kashmir, the Middle East, Taiwan etc. However, the numbers of armed conflicts and victims of armed conflicts have decreased. Never before have nations been so interdependent and never before have peoples of the world cared so much for the wellbeing of each other. Prospects are great for a functioning world organization, devoted to establishing peace, promoting respect for universal Human Rights and securing our environment for future generations.

“If all can agree that we need international cooperation and multilateral solutions to protect the earth against climate change and the destruction of our environment, to keep the world economy in balance and moving, and to prevent terrorism and organized crime – then should it be so difficult to conclude that we also need to cooperate to stop shooting at each other?”