

Who's Who: Senator Douglas Roche, MPI

Many analysts and experts are saying that the NPT is at its greatest crisis in history. Do you agree with that statement?

The present crisis is the worst in the 35-year history of the NPT. Many observers see a two-class world of nuclear haves and have-nots becoming a permanent feature of the global landscape. In such chaos, the NPT is eroding, and the prospect of multiple nuclear weapons states, a fear that caused nations to produce the NPT in the first place, is looming once more. Of course, the international community wants to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons to Iran, North Korea or any other state and to shut off the supply of nuclear fuels to terrorists. But the only way to get all states to cooperate in strengthened measures is to address all sides of the Treaty: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and safe access to nuclear energy

What is the greatest priority for your organization at this Conference?

For the Middle Powers Initiative, the greatest priority is to encourage the New Agenda Coalition to work closely with the eight NATO states that supported the NAC resolution at the U.N. General Assembly in 2004. Strengthening the center of the nuclear weapons debate – the NWS at one polarity and the Non-Aligned Movement at the other – can lead to the implementation of discrete steps to show that the NPT Review Conferences of 1995 and 2000 are bearing fruit. There's no time for recriminations. The middle-power states should use their collective weight to press forward to build an effective bridge between the NWS and the NAM. It is extremely unhelpful for any state – whether it is Iran or the United States – to be isolated at the end of the RevCon.

In your view, what would be the best

outcome of the Conference?

The best outcome would be a Final Document with some teeth in it. That's not likely to happen. But there could be agreement on specific steps, such as the start of negotiations for a FMCT, the U.S. and Russia taking their strategic weapons off alert status, and a new committee at the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear weapons. Such agreements on specific matters might constitute an "acceptable" outcome. The worst scenario would be if there is no agreement on anything. Probably that will not happen either. So we will have to weigh carefully the actual outcome and see whether it quali-

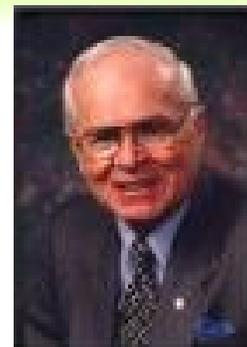
fies for "success" or "failure." A Review Conference that clearly fails (I don't want this to happen) will likely lead to end runs around the Treaty, such as an "Ottawa Process" in which a number of states may try to bring a Nuclear Weapons Convention into being without the cooperation of the NWS. However desirable a NWC is, such an approach would further undermine the NPT, particularly in the critical years 2005-2010 when an effective NPT/IAEA needs to be able to stop proliferation. The NPT is the only legal instrument we now have to lead to a Nuclear Weapons-Free World. All states must work together to make it effective.

The worst?

In the case of the worst scenario, how will the international community handle the crisis of nuclear weapons if the Review Conference should fail to significantly strengthen the regime?

You have worked in both the governmental as well as non-governmental spheres. With all of your expertise and experience, how do you think that NGOs be more effective at these NPT meetings?

First, the NGOs already are effective.



They are stalwart in their dedication, many have traveled to the RevCon at their own expense because of the continued deprivation of funding by foundations, and a considerable number of NGOs know more about the issues than some diplomats. They must keep up the pressure. Unfortunately, the general public is asleep. It is paradoxical that just when the voice of civil society is most needed to wake up governments to the increasing dangers of nuclear weapons the public voice is muted. The public is by no means uncaring about war; they just do not see the connection between retention of nuclear weapons and the likelihood of mass destruction ahead.

How did you get interested in disarmament and non-proliferation issues?

In a long career as a parliamentarian, diplomat and educator, I have come to the conclusion that the abolition of nuclear weapons is the indispensable condition for peace in the 21st century. As a grandfather, I fear for the kind of life my grandchildren will have if governments and humanity don't get a handle on this paramount moral and legal problem of our time.

Senator Roche was Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament from 1984 to 1989. He is currently Chair of the Middle Powers Initiative and the Canadian Pugwash.

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