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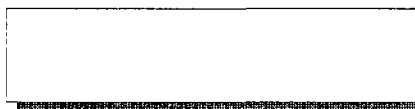
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SECRETARY-GENERAL STRESSES IMMEDIATE NEED FOR NEW AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION

Following is the text of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's address to the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, which was delivered today in New York:

I am pleased to welcome you to the United Nations at the beginning of the new year and the new millennium. This accident of the calendar has given us a chance to concentrate our minds. I hope it will also give new momentum to our work to make the world a safer place for succeeding generations.

I trust that our five new colleagues who are joining the Board this year will bring all their energies to bear on this task. Let me thank the five members whose terms have expired. And special thanks to Thérèse Delpech for chairing the Board's two sessions in 1999, and for her leadership on the disarmament and security recommendations to my draft Millennium Summit report. The Millennium Summit takes on even greater importance in light of the failure of the General Assembly to agree on convening a fourth special session on disarmament -- a session that could have set the agenda for disarmament in the coming decades.

Like you, I consider disarmament one of the most important tools of preventive diplomacy. Properly used, it can do much to reduce tensions or prevent them from arising. But unhappily, as you rightly observe, governments and institutions are more inclined to react to crises rather than prevent them.

The truth of this statement is amply reflected in the deplorable stagnation of the overall disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. As we know all too well, progress in the disarmament field tends to reflect the general political climate of the day. And the present climate is one of divisions among the main actors, which hamper exchanges between governments on disarmament issues at all levels -- bilateral, regional, multilateral, and not least in the Security Council itself.

In less than three months' time, we shall be opening the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is hard to approach it

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with much optimism, given the discouraging list of nuclear disarmament measures in suspense, negotiations not initiated and opportunities not taken. START II has not yet entered into force; START III talks have not yet begun; the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been rejected by the Senate of the United States that had been its leading champion; nuclear weapons in several countries are still on high alert.

Deployment of ballistic missile defences seems increasingly likely, posing a serious threat to the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the strategic stability it embodies. More countries have nuclear-weapon capability than ever before. Fissile material negotiations have not even begun. A dangerous arms race looms on the horizon.

That list is indeed discouraging. But it is even more disheartening to hear nuclear-weapon States reiterate their nuclear doctrines, postures and plans, which envisage reliance on nuclear weapons "for the foreseeable future". If we are even to dream of a world free of nuclear weapons by the end of the twenty-first century, we should start taking new and effective measures of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation right now.

The Conference on Disarmament must show far greater urgency and flexibility in its search for a compromise on its programme of work. Success there would enable the Treaty on the NPT review conference to meet in a far more hopeful atmosphere, and conduct a far more productive review.

In some areas, there are reasons to be optimistic. Last May, the Disarmament Commission adopted guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. There is the prospect of movement in the Middle East peace process, making possible a revival of the talks on regional arms control issues. The Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone negotiations are continuing. In South Asia, efforts are being pursued at the bilateral level to contain the negative effects of the nuclear tests on regional and international security. I hope that, once the domestic political situations are clarified in the Russian Federation and the United States, bilateral talks on nuclear disarmament will begin again at the highest levels.

I also hope that all parties to the NPT will rededicate themselves to unceasing efforts to implement all of its articles, with special attention to article 6. Our long-term goal must remain the elimination of all nuclear weapons everywhere. And, therefore, the multilateral search for genuine measures of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation must remain the highest priority on your agenda.

But there are other areas of disarmament where we can and must make a real, tangible difference. Next year's international conference on illicit trade in small arms offers an unprecedented opportunity. You have discussed the complex issues raised by the problem of small arms in the

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past. But the approach of a major international conference on the subject gives us a wonderful occasion to focus worldwide attention on it.

The question of small arms, which until the 1990s was wholly neglected at the multilateral level, is now a genuine priority -- in the United Nations, in regional organizations and in individual States. It has rallied the non-governmental organizations community and it has mobilized public opinion. The Security Council met in unprecedented sessions in September last year to consider the issue, both in general and in its specific impact on Africa.

Much time, energy and persuasion has been expended to get to this point. Now we must do everything to make sure that next year's conference is a success. The outcome must be more than a finely tuned diplomatic instrument. The specific measures it recommends -- the programme of action for States, for the United Nations and other organizations -- must make a tangible difference to the lives -- and livelihoods -- of the innocent men, women and children who are the victims of conflict. It must be a conference for them.

Finally, let me thank you for taking up one other area where you can have a real impact on people's lives: disarmament education. It is an area that has been neglected for too long. Specific education in disarmament at all levels could be an invaluable tool in correcting the misinformation, if not disinformation, that is currently circulating about disarmament norms whose general acceptance had been won by long and patient effort.

Education is, quite simply, peace-building by another name. It is the most effective form of defence spending there is. I look to you for recommendations on what I -- and the United Nations as a whole -- can do to advance that cause.

Last year, this Advisory Board received an unprecedented level of attention in the General Assembly and its First Committee (Disarmament and International Security). The Assembly has agreed to your recommendation to change the language of your mandate, in response to my proposals for reform and renewal of the United Nations.

The new language puts into clear focus your role as a body of eminent persons from different parts of the world, representing a broad spectrum of opinions. It tells us that you are uniquely equipped to provide independent and substantive advice on how we can break the deadlock of the disarmament agenda.

It is also an expression of trust placed in you by the entire membership of the United Nations: it gives you something to live up to. I am sure that in your work to make this world a safer place for succeeding generations, all of you will do your utmost to justify that trust.

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