

Report of the UN Colloquia

« UN Agencies connecting with academics and civil society »
(UNO-City Vienna, January 11th - 13th 2012)

Session III: Nuclear Security and Global Governance

By Charlotte d'Elloy

After a well-deserved lunch break that permitted fruitful comments on the previous sessions, the afternoon panel started at 2.30pm sharp. The multimedia room of the UNIS building filled up rapidly, with a majority of Czech students as the chair of the panel, Prof. Jönsson introduced the five panelists and welcomed the audience.

A global framework of nuclear energy

The first speaker, Dr. Khammar Mrabit currently Director of the Office of Nuclear Security, in the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), introduced forthwith a major threat to nuclear security. « Responsibility for nuclear sustainability remains to the states whereas proliferation goes beyond borders ». Therefore, the IAEA is pulling together a new contractive approach since 2006.



In order to protect populations and the environment, balance the needs of energy especially in poor countries, ensure an equitable distribution of supplies on a market that serves the interests of producers and consumers, Dr. Mrabit called for a global framework of nuclear energy. This framework would be based on a pact between states and an international energy body.

The reader can find an official presentation about the global framework of the IAEA under this following link: <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/nuclearsecurity/lfns150611.pdf>. The IAEA has elaborated a variety of education programs with academics given the high demand of knowledge. Further information is also provided through a hundred peer reviews and about 16th publications of the agency's work.

Finally, Dr. Mrabit addressed the legacy of weaker security states. Not only is it important to consolidate an internationally controlled system of nuclear use but also to protect and inform states which neglect the subject as they consider themselves not to be in danger by not having any nuclear structure or policy.

Threat perceptions and security mechanisms

Ms Elena Sokova, the Executive Director of the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP) rose to speak next. She first analyzed in retrospect how the international community became aware of the great threat of nuclear proliferation.

According to her, the Munich attacks were the first events that led nuclear terrorism to the first place on the United States agenda. The collapse of the USSR enabled the smuggling of high amounts of dangerous material into Europe which has often been glamorously mediated through the James Bond movies in the eighties and nineties. « The 11/9 attacks put into perspective our on-going nuclear habits such as dirty bombs or Fukushima ».



Subsequently, Ms Sokova presented the legal steps that had been urgently needed. However these measures raised questions that remain unanswered by now.

The first mechanism aiming for security was to make states responsible for their material, policy and resources. The difficulty highlighted by Ms Sokova is that the rules don't provide prescription. Furthermore, there are no elaborated levels on which everyone agrees. The fundamental question of how we should proceed with different perceptions of threats in different countries. « How do we know that a neighboring state requested check-ups? » It appears to Ms. Sokova that the difficulties might lie in the lack of a functioning security system or enforcement.

To this end, she recommended a flexible and adaptable mechanism such as the nuclear summit process. The reader can find further information about disarmament and non-proliferation under the following link: <http://vcdnp.org/>.

Seoul Summit, March 2012



The next nuclear summit will take place in March 2012 and was his by the honorable ambassador of the Republic of South Korea in Mr. Hyun Cho.

The first nuclear summit was an idea of Barack Obama and took place in Washington in 2010. Countries who participated, announced their intention to divert their material, claimed for more responsibility and set up a hacking system of stolen material. Moreover the real purpose of this summit is to familiarize leaders with its technical aspects, often to be considered the main reason to undervalue this subject. However, this

summit encounters several difficulties in the form and the content. First the lively debates are comprised by the large number of participants (fifty approximatively), second there is no institution to enforce the decisions that will be taken in Seoul and which are still proclaimed illegitimate. Finally a very regional problem is the safeguard matter with North Korea. Program and events are to be found under this link: <http://www.thenuclearsecuritysummit.org>.

The need for a global solution, an Austrian perspective

At last but not least, Ronald Sturm from the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs (<http://www.bmeia.gv.at/>) presented in a nutshell the Austrian position towards nuclear energy and power in the last fifty years.



After the Second World War, Austria had ambitions in nuclear power and the law of 1978 enforced more research. Nevertheless after the Tchernobyl accident, a constitutional law against nuclear weapons dropped Austria out of nuclear fission programs, nuclear fusion programs were maintained in the future. Austria is since then in favor of the enhancement of nuclear security in code of conduct and by risk reduction activities. In this regard, Austria claims the need for a global solution in regard of nuclear security. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was one part which has to be completed by a comprehensive view: each country has the right to use nuclear power with its neighboring countries as the AIEA has only an authority in safeguard but none in national issues.