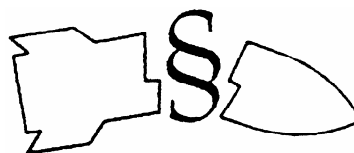


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January 18, 2007 - VIA HAND DELIVERY

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

The undersigned represent New York-based civil society organizations that work on issues of disarmament and security in the United Nations context and have worked closely with the Department for Disarmament Affairs: Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, Reaching Critical Will/Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Hague Appeal for Peace, Global Action to Prevent War, Peace Boat, Global Policy Forum, International Action Network on Small Arms, NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, and Security, and Middle Powers Initiative. We congratulate you on your assumption of the position of Secretary-General. *We write in support of keeping an independent Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA), with its own mandate and Under-Secretary-General.*

We are greatly concerned by reports that DDA might be subsumed under the Department for Political Affairs, or downgraded to be headed by an assistant secretary-general and perhaps designated a special office. Such changes would be unnecessary and unhelpful, both in terms of the UN fulfilling its mandate and servicing inter-governmental meetings and treaty bodies.

Disarmament is one of the central tasks of the United Nations. The first UN General Assembly resolution called for nuclear disarmament, and the UN Charter envisions the "the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources" (Article 26). The UN must live up to its mandate and prioritize disarmament in the Secretariat, maintaining the independent DDA instead of subordinating it to other agendas.

The UN should not be reducing the stature of disarmament at a time when the problems posed by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as small arms, are escalating. The DDA was established in its current form in 1998 in order to address post-cold war disarmament and non-proliferation issues.¹ It is even

¹ In 1997, a report of the Secretary-General explained the rationale for the establishment of DDA as

more necessary in an era with increased opportunity for, but decreased attention to, disarmament. Moreover, the world's disarmament machinery, norms and regimes are embattled now, and reducing the stature of the primary global institution responsible for implementation of UN decisions is the wrong course.

In a January 4 op-ed in the Wall Street Journal calling for reassertion of the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world, former high U.S. officials George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, and Henry Kissinger and former U.S. senator Sam Nunn characterized the present situation this way:

[T]he world is now on the precipice of a new and dangerous nuclear era. Most alarmingly, the likelihood that non-state terrorists will get their hands on nuclear weaponry is increasing... [U]nless urgent new actions are taken, the U.S. soon will be compelled to enter a new nuclear era that will be more precarious, psychologically disorienting, and economically even more costly than was Cold War deterrence. It is far from certain that we can successfully replicate the old Soviet-American 'mutually assured destruction' with an increasing number of potential nuclear enemies world-wide without dramatically increasing the risk that nuclear weapons will be used.

Especially in this historical context, it is important for the Department for Disarmament Affairs to remain its own entity with its own mandate and Under-Secretary-General whose primary concern is disarmament. It is also important that a department dealing with nuclear disarmament answer to an Under-Secretary-General from a non-nuclear weapon state. DDA houses years of technical and policy expertise and institutional memory which are invaluable to governments and civil society. It could be quietly lost under a different department. When the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency was moved into the State Department, technical expertise and institutional memory was lost, as was internal advocacy for disarmament. Among other things, having a disarmament-focused department allows decisions to be made more quickly than they would in a department that deals with disparate issues and is not necessarily familiar with disarmament matters.

follows:

2B.1 Disarmament is a central issue on the global agenda. *With the end of super-Power rivalry, nationals everywhere have come to recognize their stake in the success of multilateral negotiations and the monitoring of weapons development.* The emergence of new dangers and actors has added fresh urgency to the tasks that the United Nations is called upon to play in the area of disarmament. In the post-cold-war period, there is a growing threat from the spread of nuclear weapons technology and material, as well as a wider interest in acquiring biological and chemical weapons and means of delivery for such weapons. Regional warlords, criminal syndicates and various terrorist groups have during recent years become involved in trading in and the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. The extensive use and destructive power of landmines in areas of armed conflict and the flow of conventional weapons and small arms into the hands of civilians have become items on the international agenda and have often to be addressed in the context of peacekeeping operations.

2B.2 *Consequently, a managerial reorganization of Secretariat capacities will now be effected so that a structure can be put in place to respond more effectively the priorities of Member States in the fields of disarmament and arms regulations. A Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation will therefore be established, headed by an Under-Secretary-General.*

United Nations reform: measures and proposals: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999: Report of the Secretary-General. A/52/203 (11 September 1997), p. 13 (emphasis supplied).

Among its many crucial functions, the Department for Disarmament Affairs:

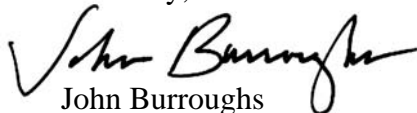
- serves states parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which does not have its own secretariat;
- serves the General Assembly during the First Committee on Disarmament and International Security when the world's governments meet and debate the most pressing disarmament and security issues;
- serves the Conference on Disarmament, the world's sole multilateral disarmament treaty negotiating body;
- maintains the Register of Conventional Arms and the Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures;
- plays a pivotal role in implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, especially in countries in which the UN does not have a peacekeeping mission;
- implements programs under the “Practical Disarmament Measures” mandate of the General Assembly;
- monitors the compliance of states parties with the Ottawa Treaty on landmines (the Article 7 mandate);
- monitors implementation of the Small Arms Program of Action;
- provides independent assessments to the Secretary-General and Security Council and General Assembly as appropriate; and
- provides technical assistance to governments regarding ratifying and implementing treaties.

Further, there is potential, and the need, for DDA to do much more. Stripping DDA of its departmental status may undermine its capacity to fulfill its present functions, and almost certainly would prevent it from realizing its potential. *A subsumed or demoted DDA would lack the flexibility, mandate and resources to play a significant role in **emerging** issues on the arms control agenda.*

In sum, the Department for Disarmament Affairs must not lose its unique identity and mandate and its ability to report directly to the Secretary-General through its own Under-Secretary-General. The quantity and technical nature of the Department's work is sufficient to warrant a dedicated department, and the subject the Department covers is sufficiently urgent and complex to justify expansion rather than absorption.

We hope and trust that your term will be a productive one for advancing the objectives of the United Nations. We are convinced that starting out by demoting the Department for Disarmament Affairs would be the wrong move. We thank you for considering the views expressed in this letter.

Sincerely,



John Burroughs

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Vernon Nichols and Jim Nelson
Co-Presidents, NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace, and Security

Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.
Chairman, Middle Powers Initiative

cc: Mr. Vijay Nambiar, Chef du Cabinet