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Check against delivery

NATO: Security without nuclear weapons

Dr Ute Finckh-Krämer, Member of the German Bundestag

Ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted to have the privilege of speaking to such a high-level and distinguished audience and of being able to share my thoughts with you today. In this same vein, let me also take the opportunity to express my great relief at the release of the OSCE observers abducted in late May. I hope that they have now returned to their home countries and their families safe and sound.

During the last legislative period, the Bundestag spoke out in favour of global nuclear disarmament with an overwhelming majority. This continues to guide the policies of the Social Democrats in the German Bundestag. It is an objective that currently seems difficult to reach, however. One important first step in this direction would be to significantly reduce the role of nuclear weapons inside NATO and then to back this up by developing alternative security concepts. Building on this, it would then be possible for NATO to fully renounce nuclear weapons as part of its strategy.

Against the backdrop of the current crisis in Ukraine, the issue I am addressing today is of increasing significance, as it seems necessary to recall the question of the different dimensions of security.

First of all, NATO was not founded as a nuclear alliance. At the time of NATO's foundation, only the US was in possession of nuclear weapons. What is more, it has to be said that NATO's ability to take military action was still limited in the early stage of the Cold War.

In my opinion nuclear weapons create uncertainty and insecurity. The nuclear arms control system developed in the 1960s when it became clear to the political leaders at the time that the use of nuclear weapons would have disastrous consequences for people and societies. The concept developed to prevent this disaster, Mutual Assured Destruction - with the acronym of MAD, or mad, coined by the Americans in typically self-ironic fashion - was designed to act as a deterrent. From the point of view of the players at the time, nuclear arms control was necessary not to create security, but to lower the insecurity created by nuclear weapons.

To this very day we cannot say for sure whether the players did really deter each other, or whether they rather deterred themselves from using nuclear weapons as a kind of self-deterrent.

At present, NATO continues to be a nuclear alliance. Even today, there are still countries in NATO which believe nuclear weapons are a valuable means of ensuring security. Among them – naturally - the nuclear weapons states. Furthermore, the new NATO members are particularly concerned about Russia as a potential threat for historically understandable reasons. Precisely in some of these countries, the presence of American nuclear weapons in Europe, and their inclusion in NATO's defence posture, is seen as a symbol of the US commitment to NATO's European Members.

Before I go into this, I would like to take a closer look at the different approaches of security: Threat-based security and Common Security

Security and threats

The NATO Alliance aims to protect its members from attacks on their respective national territory. *This NATO task constitutes a defence mandate.* The question which arises is who is threatening the territory of NATO members, by whom do they feel threatened and how can we react appropriately to this perception of threat. A question fairly easy to answer during the East-West conflict: We had two heavily armed military alliances head to head, representing mutually exclusive ideologies and visions of society.

During this period, NATO justified its nuclear weapons with an assumed or real conventional superiority of the Soviet Union. Since the end of the Cold War the

conventional balance of power has changed completely. NATO is now the strongest conventional military alliance in the world by far. Furthermore the development of modern high-precision weapons means that many military targets which nuclear weapons were originally designed to combat can be destroyed by conventional weapons. And the growing danger posed by nuclear proliferation - in particular in connection with threats posed by terrorists - cannot be circumvented by nuclear deterrent postures.

So the NATO summit in Chicago in May 2012 was a disappointment to all those who had hoped to see steps towards a reduced role for nuclear weapons in NATO. Instead, it saw the prerequisites put in place for a modernisation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems and the expansion of strategic anti-missile defence. The declaratory statements of intent in the field of nuclear disarmament made at the summit lacked any substance.

Renouncing the modernisation of the American nuclear weapons stationed in Europe would have sent out a strong signal in the run up to the next Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. This - along with the withdrawal of the tactical nuclear weapons still stationed in Germany and Europe - remains a central goal for the Social Democrats in the German Bundestag.

From our point of view nuclear weapons do not provide any guarantees of security.

Common security

The alternative concept is common security, developed in the last decade of the Cold War in the European political debate.

The six principles of common security are:

1. All nations have a legitimate right to security.
2. Military force is not a legitimate instrument for resolving disputes between nations.
3. Restraint is necessary in expression of national policy.
4. Security cannot be attained through military superiority.
5. Reduction and qualitative limitations of armaments are necessary for common security.

6. 'Linkages' between arms control negotiations and political events should be avoided.

Arms control, where opposing interests support each other, was a dress rehearsal for common security. After the end of the East-West conflict, there was a brief period of renewal, which led for instance to the foundation of the OSCE and which promoted arms control and disarmament treaties in Europe. In the field of nuclear disarmament, the independent Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of presidents George H. W. Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin made significant progress possible in the reduction of tactical nuclear weapons.

The OSCE provides us with a framework for common security. This framework has not been filled with life yet and the attempts made to date to do so have failed. This has to do with diverging interests of the participating states and with the principle of consensus in the OSCE.

Implementing common security would make it possible to work on NATO's problems of traditional threat perceptions. One can harness the ideas behind the policy of détente and make policies in this vein, using the experience all the players have from the time of the East-West conflict. But this requires partners open to dialogue on all sides. And: all sides have to be willing to talk about their own failings without having to justify themselves.

Future threats to security can no longer be clearly attributed to government players. Thinking about which security threats will be relevant in the future, we see that the significance of nuclear weapons can and must be reduced further. To counter them effectively, police and other non-military resources are the more suitable approach. As experience has taught us, non-military means are essential to create stability and peace. Diplomacy, mediation, political and economical support help to resolve or avoid conflicts and that is why they will have to be expanded.