

Transcript of the Press Conference of Hans Blix on the WMD Commission

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Spokesperson:

This morning Hans Blix has handed over a copy to the Secretary-General the report on weapons of mass destruction by the independent Commission. I give you the floor sir.

Hans Blix:

Thanks you very much, it's a pleasure to be here again. And the reason why I am here is that we have delivered a report called Weapons of Terror in which you have presented some 60 recommendations how the world community can tackle the problem posed by nuclear weapons, biological weapons and weapons. There is also a full chapter dealing with the UN and the Security Council. I handed it to the Secretary-General a few moments ago.

The Commission was set up in 2003, when the then Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh who was tragically murdered in the autumn of the same year who phoned me in my last month in New York and asked me whether I would chair such a Commission of selected members and I said yes, I'd be delighted to do that and we started the selection process in the Autumn of 2003. I was given a completely free hand. What she said was that the Swedish Government prepared to pay a major part of the bill, and all the rest was paid by a Canadian Foundation, the Jennifer Simons Foundation in Vancouver. Its good to have these two inputs, a government interested in disarmament and a foundation from the civic side of the world, because NGOS are an important part of this

We had 14 members in the Commission; we were independent, and never got even advice from the Swedish government or any other government. They represent all the continent of the world, with the North American continent represented by former Defence Secretary Bill Perry, Gareth Evans from Australia, Mr. Arbatov from Russia. We had a number of very strong and competent women, Alyson Bailes head of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute and Patricia Lewis Director of UNIDIR, Ambassador Sylla of Senegal and Ambassador Azambuja from South America. It was not a political team. Some of the Commissions of the past, some like the Palme was more selective on a political basis, we were more people who are experts in the subject of disarmament. The report is unanimous; there are no reservations on it.

The political background, of course, is the stagnation in field of disarmament field. When Anna Lindh called me on June of 2003, the invasion of Iraq had already taken place. There was no weapons of mass destruction, that was confirmed. While the dismay was felt on the US side about the insufficiency of international instruments like the NPT to prevent proliferation in Iraq, in Libya, North Korea and now maybe, maybe, Iran. That dismay was then followed, succeed, by the military means that did not discover any WMD, there weren't, there weren't any. I think that we still in that situation that one discovers the limitations of that means and a possibility then to go back, or continue with the cooperative approach, the multilateral approach, strengthening the instruments that we have.

Looking at the resolutions like 1540, with which you are familiar, or the Proliferation Security Initiative, the PSI, as supplements not as replacements of the multilateral institutions

What are the proposals we are coming with? Well, there are 60 of them. With a couple of exceptions, they are substantive. The two that are not are procedural, one suggests another World Summit after due, and long and proper preparations in order to make up for the failure of last years

Millennium + 5 Summit to even accept any lines on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. And we are also suggesting that the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which the main negotiating forum for disarmament which has been out of work, without a work programme, for a good number of years, I think 8 years [it is 10], that they should no longer be stuck with the procedural rules that come from the cold war that they must have consensus to put an item on the agenda. They should be able to put items on the agenda with a 2/3 majority. The General Assembly can have new items on the agenda with a simple majority, and they do. But in Geneva, we suggest at any rate at 2/3 majority should be possible to bring up an item for discussion. Another matter is that you need ratification to get states to accept. But even with the requirements of consensus about the programme, we see that an important item like the CTBT, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, that has not been ratified by everybody.

Which brings me to the substantive items.

The CTBT is in my view the single most important item. This is what the commission says too. If there were to be ratification by governments of the CTBT, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, including the United States where it was turned down in the Senate a number of years ago, then this would change the atmosphere very considerably. We don't see any sign of that; the current administration in the US is opposed to a ratification. But the reality is probably that if the if US were to ratify, then China would, and if China did, India would, if India did, Pakistan would, and if Pakistan did, then Iran would; it would set in motion a good domino effect.

Now, apart from that the FMCT, the Fissile Material Cut off Treaty is another vital instrument, the treaty that would prohibit the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, of highly enriched uranium or plutonium. You will remember that a few days ago the US tabled a draft of such a treaty in Geneva, but it did not contain any features about verification. The Commission discusses this matter and says yes, we think the CD in Geneva should take up the FMCT without any preconditions. Others would like to have as a precondition that also stocks of highly enriched uranium and plutonium be included. We say let them start the discussion without precondition and then let them come to these thorny issues. It is the Commission's view that such a treaty can be verified. If it is not, it is hard to understand why the world is undertaking verification of enrichment in Japan and Brazil, which are parties to the NPT. So we think that is another of the big issues.

We also discuss concrete cases, which you as media people will be interested in. We devote a couple of pages to Iran and also a number of pages to the North Korean issue. Also the question of the fuel cycle, the enrichment in the future, if we have a nuclear renaissance, a revival, people are worrying that this could mean more enrichment plant, and there could be leakages of materials for weapons purposes. We discuss ElBaradei proposals, and what Washington has come out with in this regard. I think I shall stop there because we don't have many minutes, and I know you are more eager to ask questions than to listen to lectures.

Question: inaudible. What you are saying is that the CD should reach a resolution on the FMCT. Will the efforts of member states come to any fruition?

Hans Blix: There is discussion in the First Committee in the General Assembly about the issues of disarmament. Last year the World Summit failed to adopt any lines on these subjects. I think one can sense a frustration on both sides of the line in the non-proliferation treaty. That treaty is after all a bargain, in which the non-nuclear weapons states say that they will not acquire weapons and the nuclear weapon states promise they will negotiate towards disarmament. This was said very clearly in 1995, all the non nuclear weapons states accepted an extension of the treaty to be binding without any limitation, and they were given promises then by the other side that they would work towards the CTBT and a number of other things. It was confirmed in the year 2000, but after the

year 2000, we heard in the conference of 2005 that these things are from another era. I think there was a feeling among the non-nuclear weapon states that they were being tricked into having giving a consensus and the other side had the feeling that the instrument of the NPT did not really prevent Libya, Iraq, etc.

I think one has to come back to that fundamental bargain. It is not only the NPT, but that is the most important document. There is the question of the FMCT and reduction of nuclear weapons, between the US and Russia. They have the SORT treaty under which there is reduction, but it's a very meager treaty without verification. And one of the proposals of the Commission is that they should proceed with that. Another proposal relates to the non-strategic weapons, the tactical nuclear weapons that Bush the father agreed, or rather in parallel declarations by Russia, the USSR in those days, and the US in doing away with a great many of the tactical nuclear weapons. The Commission proposes that they should continue that, that they should make it into a treaty, and that they should withdraw tactical nuclear weapons from any foreign soil. That would mean that in the Western world that they would withdraw nuclear weapons from Western Europe and into the US territory and from the Russian side, that they should withdraw the weapons into central storage; they are on the continent, they cannot take them elsewhere. These are some of the things that we are proposing.

We think in the climate, not today, but maybe in the climate that is coming here, that there may be more of an intention to negotiation. I think you can see, if you take the case of North Korea, well, they have been talking off and on in Beijing. It's not in the Security Council, there is not talk of Chapter 7 in the case of North Korea, they are taking in Beijing. And in the case of Iran, we can see how the Security Council was used as a sort of threat against the Iranians, and they are still in the Council and there is still talk about sanctions, but nevertheless there is more talk now, and the Commission endorses that approach. And we also endorse generally the view that you must look at the security of countries. That the incentives to go for nuclear weapons is usually linked to feelings that they have a need to defend themselves, it is a perceived need, it may not be correct, but it's a perceived need, and you have to take away that incentive in order to get them away from the weapons.

Edith Lederer, AP: A quick question on the title, I think some people might look at a world without any WMD as sort of pie in the sky and something that will never happen in any of our lifetimes. I wonder if you could comment on that? I also wonder if you can you elaborate on the last statement you made as far as security assurances; the Chinese Ambassador said yesterday that he believes that the Iranians should be offered security assurances in this package of incentives. I wonder in light of what you have just said whether this would be something your Commission would endorse?

Hans Blix: All right. On the title of the book, we were convoked to become a Commission of Weapons of Mass Destruction. That term, the very term, is not uncontroversial. For instance, the Carnegie Endowment has abandoned using it at all. It is so strongly used and minted that we couldn't go away from it, but there are vast differences between, if you ask how many countries are there with weapons of mass destruction in the world, you come up fairly high, maybe 30, I don't know, but if you ask how many nuclear weapons states there are, well then there is eight or possibly nine. So there is a great many differences in these weapons, their production, possession and use. However, there is a common feature, they are all weapons of terror, they are designed to instill terror and panic. They are not the only ones, a weapon like white phosphorus or napalm, they are also weapons designed to cause terror, so is gas, chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, they are weapons of terror. So we chose that term as a title for it to get away from the minted expression and to describe what they are. But the categories are the three that we are dealing with. We also deal with outer space, where feel there is at the present a race going on, it is not simply that there is

stagnation in the world on disarmament, there is also a race going on in outer space weapons, there is one. And also when it comes to nuclear weapons, there is a race going on, with US discussions about new types nuclear weapons, and certainly interest or activity in the same way in other countries.

Now, as for security assurance, we think that, and its not a novel thought, that the first line of defence against the spread of nuclear weapons is indeed to make states feel that they don't need them. You look at the European strategy against weapons of mass destruction; that is precisely what they say. So the first barrier against proliferation weapons of mass destruction lies in foreign affairs, in foreign policy, not in the military. But when you talk about negative security guarantees, as I think you alluded to, well that is a different matter. That is an old concept, which came with the NPT long ago that the countries that would commit themselves to non-proliferation, they would also be given an assurance, that if they do away with these weapons they will not be attacked by nuclear weapons by anyone. And we think that is important.

Looking specifically at Iran, which I think you referred to. Yes, we think, Iran is described as a threat, and their enrichment of uranium is described as a threat to the whole world. The Commission is also of the view that it would be desirable that Iran refrain from going on with enrichment of uranium. But one must also try if you want a solution for this, to look at this from the issue from the side of the Iranians. They see 130,000 American soldiers in Iraq, and they see American bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan and more American military activities to the north of them. They remember that Mossadegh who was elected Premier was ousted with a subversive method from the outside. So it is not inconceivable that some groups in Iran may feel that their security is being threatened from the outside. That has to be taken into account when you search for a solution. We make some specific proposals in this regard.

First of all the Commission sides with the idea that is desirable to have a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, and in the Middle East everyone agrees in the Middle East agrees with that and votes for that, including Israel. But of course at the present time, the situation being what it is, you are not going to have it, we have to come much further in the settlement of the Middle East before this can be a possibility. It is part of a settlement, but clearly we are not there yet.

What we are suggesting is that maybe you could take or do something as a step in advance of that. Looking at what has happened in North Korea, you can get an idea. In the case of North and South Korea, it's clear that the two countries neither will have enrichment or reprocessing, they will neither enrich uranium nor plutonium in the future. What about seeking similar commitments from the states in the Middle East, we are seeking a commitment from Iran that they should not do any enrichment, but what about widening it, as you do on the Korean Peninsula, and have a zone, an area, in which all countries commit themselves not to produce enriched uranium and not to produce plutonium. It would also mean Iran would refrain from this, it would also mean that Israel would commit to not produce more plutonium. They are assumed to have around 200 nuclear weapons. They would commit themselves not to produce more plutonium for more bombs. I don't know whether they produce it, but they would make that commitment. So would other countries be asked, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt etc, so that one would walk in the direction of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction rather than away from it.

Question: You seem to say in your report the P5, the nuclear countries that control the SC are busy issuing resolution on the proliferation of WMD and right so, you also seem to be saying they are not fulfilling their commitment to the NPT or its indefinite extension in 1995. How can the world ensure disarmament of the nuclear powers and make them to actually take their power seriously in accordance with the NPT.

Hans Blix: Well I think they can only decide themselves to move in this direction. We have now seen the war in Iraq. And we have seen the crisis, the acute cases of Korea and of Iran. And I think that while they are negotiating, we applaud what they are doing in discussion with Korea and the way they are moving in the case of Iran, I think they will see that it is difficult to be successful in assuring non-proliferation unless they themselves participate in it. It's not we can force the US, or anybody else, but they will see it themselves. It's not only the US that has the question. Also the UK will be deciding whether to have a continuation of Trident or not, the French will be in the same situation. We are pointing also to the others India, Pakistan, and Israel, they all have to contribute to move away from nuclear weapons and the weapons of mass destruction. We point to the Security Council as an important instrument and we are applauding the movements in the Council to make use of its authority. They did so already at a meeting at Summit level in the 1990 when they declared proliferation as a threat to international peace and security. We have seen more recently in resolution 1540, that each country has a duty to enact legislation under which they would criminalize individuals trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction because the conventions prohibit the states from doing it. The 1540 is therefore an extremely interesting development in the UN, in which you can see that the Council is beginning to enter into the field of legislation. They had executive power, they had investigative power and now they have also been moving somewhat into the legislative power. We say this is good. But they should utilize their authority in accordance with the Charter. Giving in orders to Members, under Article 25 of the UN Charter, members are obliged to carry out the decision of the Security Council, decisions are under Chapter 7 and such decision can be adopted when the Council has first determined that there exists a threat to international peace and security, or breaches of the peace, or acts of aggression. This is a decision for the Council. If the situation does not correspond to such a grave situation, then there is Chapter 6, about which some of you may have heard but no one talks about it, that is addressed to situations which are not yet a threat but which may develop into a threat to international peace and security, there the Charter only recommends and authorized diplomatic means and authorizes the Council to go into diplomatic means

The authors of the Charter were not pacifists, nor is the Commission and nor am I. At the same time the authors of the Charter were not trigger-happy, they preferred peaceful means, and this is an important thing to keep in mind when you examine what the Council should do.

Jim Wurst, GSI; You have alluded that this is about politics, not science, not military. Are the Commissioners going to capitals, Mr. Perry in DC, etc.

Hans Blix. We don't have a war plan if that is what you mean! We are first of all disseminating it, we are addressing it to governments, we are making it available to you and the media, the document today is available at the website of www.WMDCommission.org, The press kit here is available to all of you which contains the recommendations. For those who want hard copies, the Swedish Mission will have a big supply. We hope to address the three communities, the governmental, the people who deal with disarmament, think tanks and the public. We will have a launch in the month of June but I would imagine and I would hope that in the month of September when the autumn that we can go more widely and a more wide discussion of our proposals. That is the first step. I am going to Washington next week.

Richard Roth CNN: Could Iran be trusted with what it's saying regarding its nuclear enrichment programme and the way it is proceeding now, there are shades of Iraq obviously. What is the right course in your opinion for governments to take, since you have been so heavily immersed in Iraq and proven right? Can Iran be trusted, and what about the diplomatic pressure being applied?

Hans Blix: I'm not sure that the professor was right in the case of Iraq. We said we didn't find WMD, we didn't exclude there couldn't be some hidden. In the case of Iran, the Commission does

not assess what their intentions are. We can take note that the IAEA Board of Governors has not asserted that Iran is violating the NPT. My personal assessment is that there are different groups in Iran. In Iraq there was one view. And I saw that when the Iranian President said Israel should be wiped off the map, he was criticized in the Iranian Majles. That would never have happened in Iraq, if you had said such a thing against a ruler, then you wouldn't have existed very long. There are different views in Iran, but they are all nationalists, which we saw in India, there is a pride in nuclear accomplishment and the latest idea on the western negotiating group, namely that we would be ready to supply light water reactors for power purposes is a good thing. It's a signal to Iran that the world and the west and the US also is not against Iran going for nuclear power, they are not against this nuclear science, and moving into that category, what they are worried about is Iran going for enrichment because that would increase the tension in the world. I am personally pro nuclear power, as some of you may know. I think that it's very important from the point of view of reducing or restraining the emissions of carbon dioxide. So from that point of view I think it's welcome that a country like Iran does. I don't accept the argument that Iran has oil why should they have to have nuclear. No one said that to Mexico, no one said it to Iran during the Shah when everyone were falling over themselves trying to sell Iran nuclear power to Iran. That is a cheap argument.

The Iranians have some weaknesses in arguments, they say this is a right to do it, but from saying that you have a right to do something, it doesn't necessarily follow that you must do it. You have an option, you have a right, and if it is advantageous to stay away from using the option for a while, then why do it, if it is dangerous, you can stay away from it. They have 2 reactors, my own country Sweden has 10 to not have it we are importing the fuel that we need, it's more economic. So I can't see an economic reason behind it. For self-reliance, yes, but Iran does not have such enormous quantities of uranium in the ground, so for the long run, for nuclear power they will need to import anyway. Today I think there is very much a prestige and a question of pride that they should be able to do this. I think that the other side negotiating with them would do well to take that into account, also the questions of security. The model of North Korea, the discussion about North Korea I think is a good one, I think the US and others have moved in a healthy direction of negotiation, and I can see a similar drift in the case of Iran. But not the same, it's a more loaded issue

Q. We seem to stress the comprehensiveness of treaties in a world without weapons of mass destruction. Do you see any difference in different between the people who hold weapons of mass destruction. Do you see any difference between Iran, which publicly says it wasn't to erase one country off the face of the earth, and say Sweden or even Israel for that matter? Do you see any difference...

Hans Blix: I understand your question. I seem to remember that the American Rifle Association says weapons are not dangerous in themselves only the people who hold the weapons. I can hear an echo of that in here about nuclear weapons, that nuclear weapons are not dangerous per se, only who has them. Now, the Commission does not accept that argument. We say governments and individuals can be more or less reckless in this world, but the weapons per se are dangerous anywhere, anytime. If you look at the US there are lots of weapons on hair trigger alert, and the same allies to Russia, they are dangerous anyway. If you simply look at the actors who have them, actors change, governments change in different countries, you may be satisfied and say that these are very responsible people who won't do anything, and the next day that government can be overthrown. The view of the Commission is that these weapons are dangerous in anyone's hands, this doesn't exclude that some could be more reckless than others.

Al Jazeera. I would like to come back to the Iraqi case and the Middle east, to which extent, the case of Iraq, the war for WMD, they were not found, to which extent that specific case, or the drive for it, influenced the conclusions of this report, specifically. What is your message now, clearly

from your Commission to the Middle East, to the Islamic world, including Pakistan, India and all the rest?

Hans Blix: There is a message about a zone free of WMD, developed under that, the idea that I explained the commitment to not go for fuel cycle activities. There are others, they relate to the effectiveness of the non-proliferation instrument, and in the field I was dealing with, namely verification. The IAEA I was heading in the 1980s, did not understand what was going on, the safeguards system set up in the 1970s simply insufficient, the world did not accept such far reaching inspections as we had. After Iraq, the possibility came, governments said, yes we need stronger means, and in 1997 we got the AP, the year I left the IAEA. These is the inspection basis upon which the IAEA have been operating with Iran, although the Iranians have not been obliged to, they have not ratified, they. The IAEA means today to states, which have accepted the AP, they are much better. I wouldn't say they are 100 percent, because you can hide computer programmes and so forth, but they are much better. The other lesson from the Iraq case is that the international inspections was more reliable than the national ones were. We were objective, we were more critically thinking, and we were quite professional, we couldn't say in March 2003 that there are no weapons, we didn't say so, but we had criticism of some of the evidence they brought forward, through 700 inspections we didn't find any, we went to 3 dozens of places given to us by intelligence from different countries. Now if we had had a few months more of inspection, and we would have been able to go to all sites given by intelligence, and since there weren't any weapons of mass destruction, we would have been able to tell them, there were not any at these sites. They should have drawn the conclusion that there was something wrong with their sources. The war might have been avoided. I don't go into that particular conclusion. What I draw is that for the future it is desirable to rely on international inspection, professional international inspection, and also to make use of national intelligence, I'm not against it. But national intelligence must not remote control international verification. It must give them tips because they have means which the international inspection does not have, they have means for listening, they have the satellites, they have the spies etc, the international inspections does not operate on that, but international inspections has the possibility of going into the sites, to go into buildings, and to demand we want to see this and that. This is something governments cannot use, so a combination is desirable. That's one principle lesson I draw from the case of Iraq.

Mark Turner? Q: One is a very technical question. Is there a kind of nuclear technology that doesn't rely on enrichment that can produce nuclear power? I understood there was some Canadian reactor, a Candu or something. Is this the way forward, to have nuclear power without the threat of nuclear weapons? I have to ask you again please, not as the Commission but as Mr. Blix, we are given evidence by both sides, supposedly one a slam dunk case that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons, and another that says there is no such clarity. Can you give a clear answer? Do you believe that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapon or not?

Hans Blix: Well, you should have understood it yourself. You know that if you can enrich to 4%, and have the technology for that, then you can by a simply political decision say that, well, use the centrifuges a number of times more and we'll get up to 90%. That's what worrying the West. Whether the Iranians have or had that intention or not, I don't know. The IAEA Board of Governors has not asserted that the Iranians had that intention. But it may well be that some of them had, that's possible. Maybe that others of them said we just simply want to have self-reliance because we cannot be assured we will get fuel from the outside. So I cannot tell whether Iran, quote unquote, Iran will do this. There are some people, there is the president, you have another part of the government, you have public opinion. What I think the western states are saying, look here, even if we were to find a fatwa from Khomeini from the past, saying that it is absolutely forbidden for this Islamic state to go for weapons, well you may believe that, and it may have had its influence, but he could change his mind in a couple of years time. Today they accepted stringent

inspection, they would accept to not enrich, well they could change in a couple of years. The is as I understand it is the western position that it is better that they do not do it at all because then they would be two years further years away from nuclear weapons if they were to change their minds.

Q. And is there a technology to make nuclear power that does not require enriched uranium that we should all be pursuing?

Any reprocessing leads to plutonium. The reprocessing of spent fuel from light water reactors is not very good for nuclear weapons but it has been shown that it can be used; therefore all such plutonium is under safeguards. But you have to reprocess the spent fuel to get material for the weapons. Enriched uranium for fuel in reactors is at around 3-4 %, that cannot be used in weapons, it has to be enriched even further, up to 80%. The Canadian type reactors, the Candu reactors, they are not less dangerous from the point of view of proliferation than any other. The US has come forward with a proposal now recently, so-called GNEP under which countries would abstain from enriching uranium for their own fuel, and they wouldn't buy fuel from states producing it, they would lease, they would hire the fuel and then when they had used it they would send back, a great relief for many countries to not having to take care of the waste, they would send it back, and then the countries that have enrichment, would also have a process under which they would reprocess it, get rid of the waste, and they would get a combination of enriched uranium, and plutonium and neptunium and they would burn that in special types of new reactors. That would take away some of the proliferation risk. It's a new idea; it will take 20 years at any rate before we are there, so we have time to think about it.

Thank you very much.