

MIDDLE POWERS INITIATIVE MEETING
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President Carter: Thank you, Jonathan. I was enjoying that very much. Well this is like a family reunion for me, because we have had these sessions two times previously with the Middle Powers Initiative at The Carter Center to discuss current problems and future challenges preceding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty meeting at the United Nations. This is one of the pleasures of my life these days. My favorite cartoon was in the *New Yorker*. This little boy is looking up at his father and he says, "Daddy when I grow up I want to be a former president." (laughter)

So I've enjoyed those days. As a matter of fact, the second major conference The Carter Center sponsored after I was involuntarily retired from the White House in the 1980 election was on International Security and Arms Control. We had Sam Nunn here, Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, and a major delegation from the Soviet Union. Since then, at least these last ten years, a group of distinguished and self-controlled leaders of nations, who could have nuclear weapons if they wanted them, have come here to consider how to prevent further proliferation of a nuclear threat. It may be that this year is the most important of all because of the tensions that exist in many parts of the world, and as you know, probably better than I, because of developments in North Korea and the threats of further developments in Iran.

I have been deeply involved in the North Korean situation. In 1994, as you remember, the world was concerned about Kim Il Sung's violation of a non-proliferation treaty. They were signatories then, and he was threatening to develop nuclear weaponry. He had discharged the nuclear inspectors who had been in his facilities, and he turned off the monitoring cameras. The United Nations, with the leadership of the United States, threatened intensified embargo constraints on North Korea. I had some friends who came to see me from China, and they made it clear, at least to me, that if that was done North Korea was highly likely to attack South Korea because it would have been not only a condemnation of the government of North Korea but also an insult to their revered leader at the time, Kim Il Sung. I eventually got permission from President Clinton to go there and negotiate. Kim Il Sung agreed with me to forgo any more purification of nuclear waste and to reopen access to the nuclear inspectors and to turn the cameras back on. As a result of that the United States, South Korea, China, and others

agreed to help North Korea develop water cooler reactors to replace the old graphite moderated reactors they were operating.

Later, as you know, when President Bush came into office, he disavowed this agreement with North Korea. Partially as a result of that, the North Koreans have embarked on a path that has led them to demonstrate the capability of partially successful nuclear explosives, and we don't know where they will go from here.

For a long time before I went there in 1994, the United States had refused to communicate in any way with the North Koreans and my own belief, then and now, was that it's better, if you have a threat of this kind, to communicate on the highest possible level of diplomacy, so at least both sides can understand each other and the threats are minimized.

One of the concerns that Kim Il Sung expressed to me was the threat of nuclear weapons being used against his nation if an altercation arose between him and South Korea. This is almost an exact duplication of the situation that exists now with Iran, where we've not had any communication with them of a substantive nature except just faltering in recent weeks. We've also had threats of steadily increasing punitive embargos and also not so subtle threats of attacks by conventional and even nuclear weapons by either the United States or Israel. I don't believe that it is conducive to restraint on the part of some doubtful Iranians, if they do exist, to threaten them with annihilation or further punishment and also refuse to deal with them directly and on an equal basis.

I'm not defending Iran; I think it's very important to prevent, as best we can, an evolving problem. Obviously everyone knows that Israel has a formidable nuclear arsenal. It did when I was president—and I'm sure it has been improved since. To wish for and pray for a nuclear free zone in the Middle East, I think, is almost hopeless. I don't see any possibility of Israel relinquishing their advantage in nuclear weaponry anytime soon. But if Iran should go nuclear, which I pray they won't, I see an additional enticement to Sunni Arab regimes to meet that threat. It also will be that way in the Far East, in South Korea and Japan and so forth, if North Korea continues with their program. So it's a very serious problem.

I would say that the meetings at the United Nations, held in five year intervals for the last 25 years, have been fruitless and non-substantive. I think the main reason for that lack of progress or achievement has been the unwillingness of the five obligated nuclear powers to carry out their commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The United States has gotten even worse lately by doing away with the restraints of the Anti-

Ballistic Missile Treaty; Russia has also disavowed it. When I was president, the US pledged not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states. The George W. Bush Administration indicated that it would use them if necessary as a preventative step. In addition, there is no doubt that we are developing new kinds of nuclear weapons in our country, including very small weapons.

An almost equal formidability in the arsenals of the United States and Russia now exists as when I left office. There has been a reduction in numbers, but both arsenals are still capable of total destruction of the other country. I think the mutuality of that attack would probably still be as important a responsibility, though not as vivid, for incumbent presidents as it was for me. I was fully committed to respond if I was informed of a threat of nuclear weapons use against my country. With our land-based silo missiles, I know I had about a 26-minute interval from the time of launch until they struck Washington, D.C., or New York, and I was prepared to respond and destroy Russia as much as I could as well. We could have wiped out every city in Russia with a population of over 100,000 or more with nuclear warheads from one of our submarines, which were almost totally invulnerable. I devoted a lot of my time to following up on what my predecessors had done in office when dealing with President Brezhnev, Gromyko, Chernenko, and other associates. We very laboriously, from a position of strength, negotiated the SALT II Treaty, which was never ratified by the U.S. Senate but remained intact for at least seven years. It was originally meant to last for five years. It was never violated by either side for seven years.

Brezhnev and I both agreed that we would move very dramatically toward a SALT III agreement, where we would have a much more substantive reduction in total nuclear arsenals, but unfortunately the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made it almost impossible after December 1979 for us to negotiate further, because we were dealing with stopping the Soviets from any temptation to move out of Afghanistan and into adjacent countries, which I thought would have been a direct threat to the security of my country.

So that was a problem when I was in office, but the same basic threat exists, because of a potential mistake by those who handle our arsenals on both sides. I think the use of nuclear weapon is much less likely now, obviously, than it was before but we still have nuclear weapons triggered for immediate use, and there is a problem with control over the remaining Soviet arsenals.

I've been very pleased lately to at least see speeches made by President Obama about this topic. Whether or not we have a follow up in that respect

by the United States and Russia, and then by the other nuclear powers, still remains to be seen.

But so far, I think without the effective end position of the Middle Powers and others, we won't see any real move made between the United States, Great Britain, France, China, and Russia to comply with their commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty any more than they have complied in the past. I hope that will happen, but I have serious doubts. We must be very fervent in our efforts.

A threat to the Non-Proliferation Treaty I faced when I was president came from India. We knew that India had done a test explosion in 1974, Prime Minister Desai of India and I had a very close, personal relationship, but we had one bone of contention between us and that was India's demand that we provide them with fuel and nuclear technology even though they refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty. I refused, and all of my successors did the same thing until more recently, when the Bush administration decided to sell to them. I wrote all of you a letter and wrote op-ed pieces and so forth, trying to get this move blocked. As you know, the legislation passed by Congressman Henry Hyde put some strict limits on India, which I think they have still refused to accept. They couldn't test any nuclear weapons; they could not sell nuclear capability to any other country, and they couldn't refuel any of their existing nuclear power plants. I don't think they have accepted any restraints on their future nuclear progress, which is extremely difficult to rationalize to Pakistan. Now we know that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is at least in some danger of being taken over in future years by militants who might overthrow the government. So that's a quagmire that's even more serious than the threats from Iran and North Korea. I don't really see the likelihood of Iran, even if they do develop nuclear weapons in the future, launching those weapons at another country. If they should launch a weapon against Israel, there is no doubt in my mind that the United States would respond accordingly and with much overwhelming power, so it would be almost suicidal for the Iranians to develop one or two or three or five nuclear weapons and to use them in an attack. But that's always a possibility that ought not to be excluded.

I was even more deeply involved during my presidency in the Middle East peace process. A major cause of our attention to this region had to do with what happened during the October War of 1973. Egypt and Syria made major strides during their surprise attack on Israel, and when Israel responded by moving toward Cairo, having crossed the Suez Canal with their forces, the Soviets threatened to use their nuclear weapons unless the Israeli advance was stopped. This is the only time I believe there has been a so called "red alert" involving nuclear arsenals in history. I may be wrong

about that, but the point is that there was a real danger, as we aligned ourselves with Israel, and Egypt was breaking away from the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union was supporting the Palestinians, Syria, and so forth, that two nuclear powers at that time would resort to the use of their formidable arsenals. So I set as a major goal before I had even entered office to bring peace between Egypt and Israel, because Egypt was the only formidable country in the region to threaten Israel's security and they had been involved in four wars with Israel in the preceding 25 years. So there may still be much less of a threat now than there was then of nuclear powers being in confrontation, but should the Mid-East peace process deteriorate further and if Iran should continue with its plans, which I think is partially dependent on peace, then that may very well present a threat to global security in itself.

I also was involved deeply in this hemisphere, in the implementation of the Tlatelolco Treaty. At that time, Brazil and Argentina were moving forward toward a nuclear capability, as is Iran now, and they were supported to a large extent by Germany and Switzerland. Both of those Latin American countries then were military dictatorships, and I felt I had a responsibility to stop that progress. So I interceded as strongly as I possibly could along with Helmut Schmidt, the leaders in Switzerland, and also with President Geisel in Brazil, and members of the five person junta in Argentina to stop that, and we were successful finally in getting that done. There were threats all over the world then as there are now; but particularly these two great nations in South America were moving towards nuclear capability. The Tlatelolco Treaty as you well know has been implemented all over that region.

I hope to see a global move made that has not been evident or existing in the past, and there are three very admirable non-governmental efforts underway. One of them is semi-governmental -- I'm sure Gareth Evans described it to you last night -- that involves Japan and Australia and that's a wonderful contribution to the possibility of dramatic reductions of nuclear arsenals in the future. The other two, also equally admirable, one headed by Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger, Bill Perry, and George Shultz. They have been going to different leaders in Russia, France, China, and Great Britain and so forth trying to get them to agree to an overall reduction. The other organization is Global Zero. They had a major meeting in Paris recently; I gave the keynote speech there at that meeting a year ago.

The problem that we see with these three major groups is that these groups don't cooperate much with each other. It does not help to have them competing and working at cross purposes. Global Zero is going to come out very soon with a motion picture that we hope will have the same beneficial effect as the one made, by the same people by the way, who made Al Gore's presentation on global warming. There is no reason that I've seen-- and I've

argued with Sam Nunn about this-- but there is very little evidence so far that Sam's group and the Global Zero folks are willing to cooperate with each other. This creates confusion in the minds of people. If they could harness their common effort and speak with a single voice I think they could be much more effective, I also think that this applies to the Japan/Australia group which Gareth Evans has been so greatly involved in.

So we have some new developments in a potentially beneficial way. I think President Obama's declaration was influenced by some of these nice groups I just mentioned, and we have increasingly publicized threats from North Korea and potentially Iran. I think among more deeply analytical minds the threat out of Pakistan may be more pre-eminent -- in my mind it is -- more so than a threat from North Korea or Iran. If something should happen in a catastrophic way in Pakistan because they have a substantial arsenal as you know . . .

These are my thoughts; as you can see I don't have a text or anything I just wanted to present my point of view developed from my time as president. I hope that this group will be aggressive and persistent and demanding of all the players in shaping world attitudes and actions in future years, and that does not exclude the five original nuclear powers that have signed the NPT and who, in my mind, have not complied with it. We shouldn't be hesitant to point out those defects, which have opened the door for leaders in North Korea and Iran, who think "maybe we can get away with it as well".

We now have the NPT signed by all except four countries: Israel, Pakistan, India, and North Korea which has now withdrawn from it. Other than that all other countries have complied as signatories, and we need to make sure that they continue to do so, and that includes my own country as well.

Thank you all very much for listening to my thoughts.