



**Statement by Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva**

**“Disarmament and Development: Arms Race or
Poverty Reduction?”**

**Event to mark the 25th anniversary of the
United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development**

**Palais des Nations, Geneva
Wednesday, 19 October 2011**

**Distinguished participants,
Ambassador Chick,
Ambassador Badr,
Distinguished Panellists,**

The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development was a milestone in the development debate. The constituent elements of the right to development are rooted in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants of Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as other United Nations instruments. The logic of the right to development, as expressed in the Declaration itself, is clear and unequivocal: Everyone has the right to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, has identified sustainable development as his key priority for the second term. It is, as he says, the “defining issue of our generation”. As Mr. Ban Ki-moon stressed in his message for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which we marked on Monday, we can overcome the challenges we face – the economic crisis, climate change, rising costs of food and energy – by putting people at the centre of our work. This is also true when it comes to the link between disarmament and development.

With only four years left before the deadline of the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, progress has been uneven across regions and across individual Goals. We face a development emergency. Urgent and increased efforts are needed if we are to meet the Goals by the deadline. Against the backdrop of the global economic and financial crisis, which is prompting Governments and international organizations

to re-adjust priorities and budgets, we must also assess seriously and realistically how resources are spent in relation to arms.

This is reflected in Article 7 of the Declaration which calls on States to promote the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security and to do their utmost to ensure that the resources released by effective disarmament measures are used for comprehensive development.

The figures speak for themselves. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, world military expenditure has topped 1.7 trillion dollars. Meanwhile, approximately 1.5 billion people have no access to energy, and approximately 1 billion have no access to clean water. Global military expenditure has doubled since the adoption of the MDGs in 2000, and the disparity between resources spent on militaries and on development is greater than ever. This arms build-up not only increases the likelihood of violence, but also ties up resources and attention.

Discussion of a nexus between disarmament and development is not new. It is embedded in Article 26 of the Charter, which refers to the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources. During the Cold War, it was often believed that the end of superpower rivalry would automatically free up resources for development. We know now that this promise remained unfulfilled. The relationship between disarmament and development is more complex, and we need to have a more nuanced approach.

This is an area that is of strong interest to United Nations Member States. Earlier this month, I took part in the opening of the First Committee of the General Assembly where many of the statements pointed to the need to review the relationship between disarmament and development in more detail.

I will suggest three ways which I believe will help us move forward, putting people at the centre of our work:

First, we need to move on from the perception of a simple, causal link between disarmament and development. Funds liberated through are not necessarily channelled towards development, although in some cases they may be. Rather, we need to view disarmament as part of broader efforts to create a security climate where sustainable peace and development can take root. Disarmament would help to build greater confidence among States and contribute towards stability, which would, in turn, also further the development agenda. If we situate disarmament in this broader security context, I believe we can move on from the narrow focus on a direct relationship between disarmament and development, which has constrained the understanding of the complex connection.

Second, we need to free ourselves from the notion that the link between disarmament and development is a linear one where disarmament must go before development. We must work on both areas simultaneously and in parallel as part of a mutually reinforcing process. We cannot wait for disarmament to free resources, just as lack of disarmament cannot become an excuse for not accelerating development. At the same time, development can help to establish a foundation of mutual trust and stability that

can serve to advance disarmament. We have to work on the two areas in a comprehensive manner.

Third, we need to integrate disarmament more closely in broader security discussions and efforts. The Secretary-General has pointed to the need for greater emphasis on conflict prevention and preventive measures, and on peacebuilding. We can only achieve meaningful progress in these areas if we include discussion of disarmament.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Disarmament and development are two of the international community's most important tools for building a better world. We have an obligation to ensure that we use both in the best possible way to address the different dimensions of our immense development challenge, also beyond the 2015 deadline for MDGs.

This reminds us of the need to redouble our efforts to move ahead in multilateral disarmament generally. As Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the Personal Representative of the United Nations to the Conference, I am deeply concerned about the stalemate in the CD. Despite positive momentum in other contexts, such as the NPT Review Conference of last year and the signing by the Russian Federation and the United States of a new START Treaty, the Conference remains blocked. I hope that today's discussions can also serve to highlight the need to overcome the impasse.

The review conferences later this year of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Biological Weapons Convention are opportunities to consolidate and strengthen our disarmament framework.

I call on all Member States to seize those opportunities.

Thank you for your attention.