



The Workshop on Examining the NPT treaty and regime hosted by the Sam Nunn Security Program

## **The Sam Nunn Security Program Hosts a Workshop to Examine the State of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime**

On March 12-13, 2007, the Sam Nunn Security Program hosted a workshop in Atlanta to explore the challenges confronting the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and, more broadly, the nuclear nonproliferation regime. This project, which is intended to develop policy recommendations to improve the NPT regime in advance of the next Review Conference in 2010, is one of four Georgia Tech research initiatives to be funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation under its *Science and Security Initiative*.

The impetus for this project was a disastrous 2005 Review Conference that was, by most all accounts, less than productive, and which ended early with no sense of consensus regarding a path forward. The 2005 Review Conference left many experts wondering whether the NPT, which is the backbone of the global nuclear nonproliferation movement, was sustainable into the future – despite its widespread membership. In one sense the NPT is a model of international cooperation. It has a membership of 188 nations, and in 1995 it was agreed that the treaty would be indefinitely extended. However, the NPT and its broader regime have also suffered a series of setbacks. In the early 1990s, it was discovered that Iraq

had been pursuing a covert nuclear weapons program while under IAEA material safeguards and as an apparent member in good-standing of the NPT. It had been incorrectly thought that the Israeli attack on the Osirak reactor had killed the Iraqi weapons program in 1981. In reality, the Saddam Hussein regime merely shifted from a plutonium path to the bomb to one relying on highly enriched uranium. Further concern resulted from North Korea's 1993 announcement of withdrawal from the NPT, and the later 2003 withdrawal that was followed through upon. While Article X, which allows withdrawal with notice and under conditions of a grave threat to a country's national security, is a necessary recognition of national sovereignty, it is also a reminder that dissatisfaction with the treaty could be met with a mass exodus of members. All of these events have led to concern about the future of nuclear nonproliferation efforts.

The Workshop began with a breakfast at which Senator Sam Nunn spoke about his views on US and global efforts to restrain nuclear proliferation. The Senator spoke about the NTI proposal to support a nuclear fuel bank. The idea behind such a fuel bank is that it reduces the risk of a disruption of fuel supply, and, therefore, makes it more appealing for states to forgo having indigenous uranium enrichment or plutonium reprocessing facilities. The NPT bargain allows non-nuclear weapon states to have such facilities for peaceful purposes, but, unfortunately, the same facilities can be employed in making fissile material for nuclear weapons. A fuel assurances program is designed to dissuade states from building such facilities and encourage them to take advantage of fuel supplied by one of the advanced nuclear states that already have the facilities in operation and can produce the product efficiently. This is done by serving as a supplier of last resort. The proposal was initially announced in Vienna in September of 2006 at the IAEA General Conference, and it involved a conditional donation of \$50 million of Warren Buffet's money to start the program. The conditions of the proposal are that there be a 2:1 match by the international community (in funds or the equivalent value of low enriched fuel) and that the IAEA take the necessary steps to implement such a program before September 2008.

The Senator also addressed questions about an Op-Ed piece co-authored by George Schultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn on the potential for a nuclear weapon free world and the need for a new perspective on nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War world. The bipartisan piece by these three giants in the arena of US foreign policy drew great attention and has provoked much thought. The Senator closed his prepared remarks with a list of policies that he would like to see the US and other countries adopt in the future. The first of these was to work to make nuclear weapons less relevant to each country's overall security, and the path he proposed to this objective was to increase warning time so that rash decisions were not necessary in the realm of nuclear decision making. Second, countries should bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty into force. The US is among a group of 10 of 44 annex 2 countries that must ratify the treaty for it to enter into effect. This treaty would go beyond previous test bans to prohibit all nuclear explosions. Third, states should advance negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty that would prohibit the production on weapons grade fissile material. Finally, Senator Nunn suggested that protecting and safeguarding nuclear materials was critical, and that an important step would be to work toward elimination of the use of Highly Enriched Uranium [HEU] in commerce, putting all HEU under safeguards, and working to convert current HEU activities to Low Enriched Uranium.

After welcoming remarks and an overview of the project by John Endicott, the first panel took up the discussion of the US and Russian perspectives on the global nuclear nonproliferation regime. William Potter, Director of the Monterey Institute of International Studies' Center for Nonproliferation Studies, gave an overview of the US role in nonproliferation. Dr. Potter emphasized that amending the NPT is not a feasible path forward, but that it might be possible to achieve consensus on reinterpreting some of its provisions – though even this would require great efforts. Concern about the withdrawal by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [DPRK] has raised a discussion about reinterpreting the withdrawal clause (Art. X.) Potter went on to recognize roots of the current NP regime in the Cold War era and he discussed the considerable cooperation that took place between the superpowers on this particular issue. One example of this cooperation was displayed when the Soviets informed the US about a planned South African nuclear test site in the Kalahari Desert in 1977. However, in the post-Cold War era new challenges to cooperation have arisen that revolve around differing perceptions on the nature of the NP threat, and the countries that present the most immediate threat of proliferating. Potter was quite critical of how US policy has evolved on the NP regime in the post-Cold War era including policies such as the US-India nuclear deal and opposition to the CTBT.

Anton Khlopkov, Deputy Director of the Center for Policy Studies (Russia) [i.e. the PIR Center], gave an overview of the Russian view of the NPT. Khlopkov also began by emphasizing the joint leadership provided by the US and the Soviet Union (later Russia) in nuclear nonproliferation efforts.

The commentator for this panel was Kennette Benedict the Executive Director of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*.