

**Welcoming remarks
Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Annual NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation

Warsaw, 10th-11th December 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you all to Warsaw. I have the privilege of introducing our Guests of Honour: Minister Adam Daniel Rotfeld and Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter. Their participation will make an invaluable contribution to the debate.

It is appropriate that the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be hosting the first ever annual NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation on the 10th anniversary of Poland's joining of NATO. As you will be well aware, 2009 marked a number of significant milestones for Poland. As well as 10 years of NATO membership, we celebrated 5 years of membership of the EU. The first democratic government in the former Soviet bloc was established in Poland twenty years ago, and we are coming to the end of a decade of progress and transformation.

We recognize the importance of anniversaries, which give us the chance to reflect on what has been achieved and to put our present challenges into historical perspective. But if 2009 was a year where we could be excused for indulging in a little retrospection, the coming of a new year and a new decade remind us not to neglect the future. This applies to Poland as much as any other country. We have of course made great strides in the last twenty years. But we did not want to become members of NATO and the EU merely for protection or prestige. The achievement of those goals did not mean, to paraphrase a tired old cliché often used in these discussions, 'the end of Polish history.' They were the first steps towards our goal of making a substantial contribution to the world around us, in a new and happier phase of Poland's story. This need to look to the future applies to all of us. We must all set new and ambitious goals if we are to look back in another twenty years with similar pride.

With these remarks on the past and the future in mind, please allow me to give my assessment of the present.

A number of developments in 2009 allowed for growing optimism in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament.

- the April speech of President Obama, outlining a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons;
- Geneva talks on strategic arms reduction between the two biggest nuclear possessors;
- the first UN Security Council summit adopting unanimously a resolution that set forth a robust nuclear nonproliferation and arms control agenda.

We are on the right path in terms of moving ahead with WMD nonproliferation, disarmament and arms control. It is of course not a simple task, but we have the necessary means at our disposal (such as the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament co-chaired by the Hon Gareth Evans, whom I warmly welcome here today) and clear goals.

The success of the Nuclear Security Summit and the 2010 NPT Conference are in our hands. We all agree that the three NPT pillars have to be addressed in a holistic manner. We hope that the ongoing successful US-Russia talks on the post-START agreement will revive disarmament efforts. This will contribute to the building of trust between not only the main negotiating parties, but also between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear armed States.

From the perspective of regional security, a debate on tactical nuclear weapons should also be of high priority. International relations based on mutual confidence and the restoration of a sense of common purpose are preconditions to strengthening the NPT process. That is why we should strengthen our commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency in relation to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The reinforcement of the non-proliferation pillar of the NPT must also be encouraged by further developing the verification mechanisms, within the spirit of the principle of “trust but verify”.

We welcome the Alliance’s contribution to this positive trend. NATO’s Comprehensive, Strategic-Level Policy for Preventing the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Defending against Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Threats illustrates the central role that NATO has to play.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a model consensus-based multilateral Convention. We note with satisfaction the rising number of countries that have adhered with the CWC. Poland is joining the OPCW Technical Secretariat in its annual outreach activities aimed at the universalisation of the Convention.

Negotiation of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty could be started in the foreseeable future. We expect the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to launch substantive work on the FMCT when the CD resumes its session in early 2010. The entrance into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty seems to be within reach for the first time in years. Amb. Tibor Toth, who has honoured us with his presence, will further elaborate on this during the conference.

Biological weapons have troubled us for decades. In 1925 the Polish Permanent Representative to the League of Nations, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, initiated the adoption of the first international instrument addressing this type of weapon of mass destruction – the Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of Poisonous Gases and Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. The spread of the H1N1influenza is an example of how difficult it is to control global pandemics.

In all of the areas I have mentioned and those that will be discussed at the conference, we have to find ways to act. Treaties alone will not suffice. That is why Poland is supporting new initiatives such as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and the Proliferation Security Initiative (Cracow Initiative). In recognition of the necessity of regional approaches, Poland hosted in June this year a PSI regional meeting with experts from European countries and EU institutions. We look forward to the further strengthening of the Initiative through its gradual institutionalization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Cold War may have ended 20 years ago, but Cold War thinking has taken longer to disappear. The ability to act constructively depends on an ability to think with clarity. As I stressed earlier this week in Brussels, if

2009 was a year of crisis, drama, and retrospection, we should devote 2010 to slow, steady and above all *constructive* progress, guided by the cool-headed recognition of our common interests. Albert Einstein once said that “I never think about the future – it comes soon enough.” We cannot afford this luxury if we are to achieve the goals that we all share.

Thank you.