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The Road to Korea 2012: Nuclear Security Summits and Global Efforts to Prevent Nuclear Terrorism

Numerous national security assessments have delineated the urgency of the threat of nuclear terrorism and warned that more needs to be done to ensure that terrorists never obtain a nuclear weapon or the materials that can be used to build one. In April 2010, President Obama convened an unprecedented number of world leaders in Washington, DC, to discuss steps that could be taken to enhance nuclear security internationally. At the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), the 47 participating nations and 3 international organizations pledged their support for President Obama's goal of securing all vulnerable nuclear material within four years and made commitments to take concrete measures toward achieving it.

In order to assess the contributions of the 2010 summit to global nuclear security and contemplate the role of the next NSS, to be held in the Republic of Korea in 2012, the Stanley Foundation hosted a roundtable dialogue October 14-16, 2010, at its 51st Strategy for Peace Conference in Warrenton, Virginia. In addition to discussing the summits, roundtable participants considered broader efforts to combat nuclear terrorism, including building international consensus on the threat and taking additional measures necessary to meet the four-year goal and to sustain nuclear security efforts.

Roundtable participants made the following key recommendations in relation to the next Nuclear Security Summit and advancing the global nuclear security agenda:

- Building on the success of the 2010 summit, serious and sustained engagement among governmental officials should be maintained prior to the 2012 summit in order to gain new political consensus and new action-oriented commitments.
- An ongoing, consultative forum should be created to provide for continued engagement of the nuclear industry and NGOs as the 2012 summit approaches.
- Recognizing that a narrow scope was one of the greatest strengths of the 2010 summit, the scope and the countries and organizations invited should remain the same for 2012.
- New commitments should be made by countries participating in the 2012 summit (see specific recommendations to follow).

This brief summarizes the primary findings of the conference as interpreted by the rapporteur, Veronica Tessler, and Jennifer Smyser and Corey Hinderstein. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this brief. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all of its recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

- It will remain difficult to sustain agreement on the priority and urgency of nuclear terrorism. The countries at the NSS should engage nonparticipating countries in other venues in order to strengthen the consensus toward action. Governments should also look to industry and NGO partners for help in making the case with the media and the public.
- Evaluating the state of global nuclear security is essential. Recognizing that while there is no universally accepted standard of nuclear security, efforts should be made to gauge the global nuclear security status and measure progress.
- Holding governments accountable to their summit commitments is a priority; therefore, countries' nuclear security actions must be transparent enough for progress to be measured.

The 2010 Nuclear Security Summit: Accomplishments and Opportunities Missed

There was broad consensus among roundtable participants that the April 2010 Nuclear Security Summit was valuable in drawing much-needed attention to the threat of nuclear terrorism. The unprecedented meeting of leaders, mostly at the heads-of-state level, was an indication of the seriousness of the threat and the need for better nuclear security. Roundtable participants praised the serious and sustained engagement among senior governmental officials (sherpas) in the year preceding the summit, when the NSS not only created a new political consensus but also made action-oriented commitments to enhance global nuclear security. In addition, the NSS created space for progress on the larger nonproliferation and disarmament agendas not directly addressed at the summit.

The summit produced a work plan that is far-reaching, yet, given the nature of the NSS, the political commitments made were voluntary and, in many cases, not as ambitious as many roundtable participants thought they should have been. Still, the summit and the sherpa process through which it was planned gave impetus to countries to make individual commitments beyond the consensus document. Roundtable participants applauded these individual country commitments, although many noted that the commitments could have gone further to increase the momentum following the summit. In addition, participants expressed concern that not all countries possessing nuclear materials or related facilities had made new commitments at the NSS.

It was remarked that the sherpa process preceding the April NSS was almost as important as the summit itself. Participants noted that the sherpa meetings helped to create an inclusive and cooperative environment for developing countries which were set to take part in the summit. The sherpa process also laid the groundwork for the consensus documents to address substantive issues and for countries to arrive at the summit prepared to make real commitments.

Public and Private Sector Engagement

The meetings on the margins of the NSS marked a significant new engagement between and among government, the nuclear industry, and civil society. In particular, engagement with the nuclear industry was an encouraging sign of the role of the private sector in advancing nuclear material security.

The day after the Nuclear Security Summit, the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) convened a group of industry suppliers, marking a milestone for private sector leaders in the area of nuclear security. In their presentations, industry leaders explained why the NSS was relevant to them as actors in a layered international effort to prevent nuclear terrorism. The NSS and its related process forced industry leaders to address their business principles and practices through this new venue for dialogue, and roundtable participants mentioned that business leaders were indeed taking their responsibilities seriously.

It was remarked that the NSS process had a galvanizing effect on industry. Many companies were convinced that industry would have to have "something to show" for its nuclear security efforts ahead of the 2012 NSS. With this in mind, another industry event was planned around the November 2010 NSS sherpa meeting in Buenos Aires.

It was suggested that the US government could do much more to engage industry. Such cooperation could both benefit and strengthen US nonproliferation policy. Still, it was noted that the NEI is a lobbying entity and that legal challenges and political constraints present themselves when government officials meet with such entities rather than directly with members.

Immediately prior to the summit, the Fissile Materials Working Group gathered experts from nongovernmental organizations representing 35 of the countries participating in the NSS. Its goal was to encourage the transparency and accountability necessary within the official process to ensure that

countries' efforts to secure nuclear materials are sustained and successful. This event, and efforts leading up to it, was commended by roundtable participants for drawing media attention to nuclear materials security and for providing media with needed background for reporting.

Existing Nuclear Security Mechanisms

Another major outcome of the summit was its endorsement, through the communiqué and work plan, of existing nuclear security agreements and mechanisms. While the NSS did not advance any groundbreaking ideas, it made clear how these agreements and mechanisms were intended to counter nuclear terrorism and gave them momentum. Roundtable participants believed that the long-term success of the 2010 summit, and of the summits to follow, will be determined by the implementation and sustainability of the policies and measures that the summits endorse.

Discussion also focused on two specific tools: UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and the G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

UN Security Council Resolution 1540. The prominence of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540) in the summit's outcome documents was noted. The NSS work plan mentioned UNSCR 1540 seven times in as many pages. Highlighting the resolution is a reflection of its complementarity to other international nuclear security efforts, as it calls on all UN member states to prevent nonstate actors from obtaining weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and related materials.

Participants noted that most countries have submitted reports to the 1540 Committee, which is the first step mandated by the resolution, but that universal compliance has yet to be achieved. Given the emphasis put upon UNSCR 1540 by leaders at the NSS, roundtable participants supported the extension of the resolution beyond April 2011.

G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. As an instrument highlighted in NSS outcome documents, roundtable participants expressed disappointment in the failure to extend the G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (Global Partnership) at the June 2010 meeting of the G-8 in Canada. Given the lack of traction in Canada, there is now intensified pres-

sure to extend the Global Partnership before its expiration in 2012. Since the NSS in South Korea will likely be in the spring of 2012, just prior to the meeting of the G-8, participants suggested that it would be appropriate to promote the extension ahead of and at the 2012 NSS.

Beyond UNSCR 1540 and the Global Partnership, two specific recommendations were made with an eye to the 2012 summit. First, countries should do their utmost to link their 2012 summit commitments to the policies and measures included in the 2010 outcome documents. In addition, there should be direct interaction between the NSS sherpas and the agencies and organizations that have oversight of these instruments so that NSS participating countries can learn precisely what actions they can take at the 2012 summit to support the implementation of those measures beyond simply offering endorsements.

Building Consensus on the Threat and Responses to It

The summit communiqué articulates the consensus that “[n]uclear terrorism is one of the most challenging threats to international security, and strong nuclear security measures are the most effective means to prevent terrorists, criminals, or other unauthorized actors from acquiring nuclear materials,” yet it remains a challenge to generate and sustain agreement on the priority and urgency of the nuclear terrorism threat. Roundtable participants recognized the NSS as an important step in breaking the inertia that has inhibited nations from acting on this grave threat. The attention created by the 2010 NSS brought a broader understanding of nuclear security and how countries can play an active role in preventing nuclear terrorism.

Roundtable participants understood that the acquisition or development of a nuclear device by terrorists would be neither easy nor impossible, and that the low-probability, high-impact equation could strengthen arguments on both sides on how diligently countries should work to avert such a disaster. Participants noted that those attempting to communicate the nuclear threat had to be sensitive to different countries' domestic and regional security concerns given the differences over the scope and urgency of the terrorist threat and whether there are universal responses to the challenge.

Participants agreed that while countries have a shared responsibility to address the nuclear terrorism

threat, individual countries have differing levels of responsibility based on their own possession of nuclear weapons, the types and forms of nuclear material possessed, the type and number of nuclear facilities on their soil, and the likelihood that material might be illicitly traded or transported through the country.

While there is no universal view of which country or region might be most vulnerable to a nuclear terrorist attack, roundtable participants noted that focusing only on a limited number of potential targets of such an attack leaves out the related roles other countries could play. Many countries could be the source of dual-use materials or knowledge-transfer or be the transit point through which material is illicitly trafficked. In addition, all countries would feel the impact of a nuclear terrorist attack, whether through economic effects or new policy imperatives following in the wake of the expected catastrophic consequences.

In addition to robust physical security at any given site, the role of police and intelligence is critical to thwarting the nuclear terrorism threat. One participant reminded the group that we must be aware of security tradeoffs, i.e., advocating down-blending of highly enriched uranium (HEU) would necessarily increase transit activities.

The principles of the NSS have upped the ante not only on countries to take the threats posed by vulnerable nuclear materials more seriously, but increased pressure has now been placed on the nuclear industry to respond to the challenge. NEI is now focusing on both the front and back ends of the fuel cycle. Other areas of concern for industry, which the NSS brought to light, are export control regimes, Division of Radiation Control (DRC) and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regulating requirements, 123 agreements, and plutonium shipments.

Consideration must be given to how, when, and to what end countries should engage their publics on nuclear security. This is another area where NGOs could be involved.

Tracking Progress on Nuclear Security

While roundtable participants generally considered the summit a success, they pointed out how the previous lack of top-level international engagement on nuclear security leaves the participating countries and organizations with a demanding agenda as they work to reach the four-year goal. One of the

indicators of countries' progress toward effective nuclear security will be their fulfillment of the commitments made at the 2010 NSS. Roundtable participants hailed the NSS for creating a forum in which participating governments will be held accountable to their commitments.

Participants concurred on the need for a mechanism to track countries' progress toward the commitments made at the 2010 summit. It was noted that such a task might be best suited for an NGO to ensure independence and objectivity. The problem with having NGOs evaluate progress is the lack of transparency in governments' nuclear security measures. While the group recognized that opacity is often necessary for national security interests, they believed that the only way to gain a common understanding of what constitutes success is by publicly showing the progress that has been made toward the commitments. NSS states must also determine how to best share among themselves the progress made toward specific NSS commitments.

While the participants agreed there are ways to measure countries' successes against the summit commitments, they were concerned that there are no precise ways to measure success toward the four-year goal or to evaluate the overall state of nuclear security.

Recognizing that there is not a universally accepted standard of nuclear security, there is debate on whether a standard could be developed. Most of the participants insisted that countries' progress had to be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Some participants argued that establishing such a standard is feasible, and that it would have a positive effect on the implementation of nuclear security practices. One suggestion was that it might be helpful to examine the evolution of the nuclear safety regime to draw upon lessons learned.

The Korea 2012 Summit: Scope and Goals

With the next NSS scheduled to be held in 2012 in South Korea, roundtable participants considered its possible impact on global nuclear security. Specifically discussed were the scope of the next summit's agenda, participation, and recommended goals.

Agenda and Participation

Recognizing that an agenda limited to nuclear security was one of the greatest strengths of the summit, any attempt to expand the scope must be carefully considered so as not to dilute the original intent to

address nuclear terrorism. Some participants noted that efforts to expand the summit's scope might also distract attention from the perception of nuclear terrorism as a most urgent threat to global security.

Given political sensitivities surrounding the issue of nuclear security, universality of NSS participation is not ideal if the goal remains to achieve substantive outcomes. Instead, the next summit should encourage implementation of existing nuclear security policies and instruments by all states.

Participants also suggested that countries participating in the NSS should look for ways to engage non-NSS countries through regional outreach, including through regional organizations. Such outreach would not only extend summit commitments to countries beyond those participating, but also strengthen regional coordination and security. NSS-participating countries should take seriously the obligation to identify ways for other countries to associate themselves with summit commitments, be held accountable to meeting those commitments, and receive credit for their progress.

Building upon the success of the 2010 summit, governments should continue to engage industry and NGOs before and at the Korea summit. An ongoing, consultative forum should be created to provide for continued engagement of all the relevant actors, or consideration should be given to bringing industry and NGOs into the sherpa process.

2012 Summit Goals

While the 2010 summit was a success in many ways, roundtable participants were adamant that the 2012 summit has to advance the nuclear security agenda beyond existing agreements. They suggested that a stronger global norm is needed. Participants also recommended specific goals for the 2012 summit.

Most participants felt that in order to achieve success, it is critical for the US administration to maintain a high level of commitment to engagement in the NSS. The process leading up to the 2010 NSS empowered US bilateral engagement, and this must be continued and strengthened in order to make real progress.

Participants emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation on the investigation of nuclear smuggling incidents, as well as known incidents of knowledge-transfer or sabotage. Since progress

toward achieving nuclear security goals can only be measured if current security gaps are identified and plugged, robust cooperation is critical for law enforcement, intelligence, and material characterization efforts.

The 2012 NSS is a forum in which countries will be expected to make further commitments. Some recommendations for additional specific commitments that could be made at the 2012 NSS to enhance nuclear security include:

- Elimination of highly enriched uranium in civil commerce.
- No new civil HEU activities.
- Adherence to a set of HEU transparency guidelines.
- Participation in the World Institute for Nuclear Security.
- A commitment to no increase in separated plutonium.
- Performance testing.
- The addition of safeguards to fuel-cycle facilities in nuclear weapon states.

Conclusion

The Nuclear Security Summits have already had a demonstrable impact on global nuclear security. At a minimum, they have generated consensus on a definition of nuclear terrorism and a set of minimum steps that countries should take in order to combat the threat. However, roundtable participants were of the opinion that the summits have the potential to stimulate action at the level necessary not only to meet the four-year goal, but to also put in place the policies and measures for effective, sustainable global nuclear security.

Reaching that potential will require rigorous effort on the part of the countries participating in the Nuclear Security Summits. It will also require an engaged nuclear industry and an active NGO sector. Only through the concerted political will of governments and serious effort on the part of industry and NGOs, will effective, sustainable global nuclear security be attained.

Participant List

Roundtable Organizer

Jennifer Smyser, Program Officer, The Stanley Foundation

Chair

Corey Hinderstein, Vice President, International Programs, Nuclear Threat Initiative

Rapporteur

Veronica Tessler, Associate Program Officer, The Stanley Foundation

Participants

Kennette Benedict, Executive Director and Publisher, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*

Thomas B. Cochran, Senior Scientist, Nuclear Program, Natural Resources Defense Council

Mary Alice Hayward, Strategy Director, AREVA

Kazuko Hikawa, Second Secretary, Political and Science Section, Embassy of Japan

Laura S. Holgate, Senior Director, Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism and Threat Reduction, National Security Council

Pervez Hoodbhoy, Professor of Physics, Quaid-i-Azam University

Jun Bong-geun, Professor, Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, Republic of Korea

Jungmin Kang, Visiting Scholar, The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University

Ramatsemela Masango, Group Executive, Nuclear Compliance, The South African Nuclear Energy Corporation

Richard Myers, Vice President, Policy Development, Nuclear Energy Institute

Miles Pomper, Senior Research Associate, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, Washington

Nikita Smidovich, Senior Political Affairs Officer, Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, Office for Disarmament Affairs, United Nations

Sharon Squassoni, Senior Fellow and Director, Proliferation Prevention Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Page O. Stoutland, Vice President, Nuclear Materials Security Program, Nuclear Threat Initiative

Tatsujiro Suzuki, Vice Chairman, Japan Atomic Energy Commission

William H. Tobey, Senior Fellow, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Alexandra Toma, Program Director, The Connect US Fund

Frank von Hippel, Professor of Public and International Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University

Paul Walker, Director, Security and Sustainability Program, Global Green USA

The Stanley Foundation Staff

Rachel Gerber, Program Officer

Keith Porter, Director of Policy and Outreach

Vlad Sambaiew, President

Elaine Schilling, Program Assistant

David Shorr, Program Officer

Richard Stanley, Chair of the Board of Directors

Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Participants attended as individuals rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations.

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The Stanley Foundation
209 Iowa Avenue
Muscatine, IA 52761 USA
563-264-1500
563-264-0864 fax
info@stanleyfoundation.org