

APLN 7th Annual Meeting

Keynote Speech

By Des Browne

Good evening. Thank you, Ramesh and Chung-in for the kind invitation to join you for this important annual gathering of the APLN. Many congratulations Chung-in for your appointment as Advisor to President Moon, Jae-in.

I know we are all very grateful to you both and the rest of the APLN team for organizing this meeting. I'm very pleased to be here in lovely Jeju for my first time, both in my capacity as Vice Chair of the Nuclear Threat Initiative and Chair of the European Leadership Network – a sister network to the APLN. I found today's discussion interesting, and I'm looking forward to participating in the Jeju Forum tomorrow.

We at NTI and the ELN are very impressed with what the APLN has accomplished in just six years, and we're encouraged by the direction the network is heading today. This has all been made possible, in the first place, by the fact that Gareth Evans, now your Founding Convenor and Patron, identified the need for such a network and worked tirelessly to get it up and running.

Today, the APLN is at a critical phase in its development. It is building on its reputation as a relevant policy player across the continent – expanding its membership and activating the network and members' involvement. I repeat, again, that both the NTI and your sister network, the ELN, stand ready to work with you and to support this dynamic. As we heard from Ramesh, APLN membership has grown from 40 to about 90 and you have a target of about 150 members.

This is certainly a reflection of the network's strong reputation as well as of what may be, in equal parts, growing concern and optimism about the future. You have a vibrant new website to showcase APLN's research and advocacy, and you are organizing a series of important sub-regional meetings to share ideas and perspectives.

As many of you here may recall, APLN's inaugural statement, signed by 31 experts and former senior officials in December 2001, said that, quote:

“We believe that we have a particular responsibility to work for change in the Asia Pacific region. As the world's economic, political and security centres of gravity shift inexorably here, our stake in the world order – and obligation to contribute with ideas, policy proposals and visions to that end – have grown commensurately. What happens in this region impact every dimension of the global nuclear agenda.”

That has never been more true than today. Unfortunately, however, this continent, which is the biggest and most populous in the world, continues to have no shortage of severe security challenges to address – including nuclear threats.

As Ramesh reminds us, this is the only continent where nuclear stockpiles are still growing and nuclear tests are still happening. We have:

- North Korea's advancing nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs. Last September, North Korea tested a nuclear weapon estimated to be the size of the atomic bomb that devastated Hiroshima. This was their fifth nuclear test and largest to date. The DPRK has short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles that could carry a nuclear warhead and target South Korea, Japan and Guam; and is working to develop solid-fueled missiles that will be harder to defend against and longer-range missiles. We are yet to see a clear approach to negotiations emerge, procedurally or substantively, between Washington and Pyongyang. At this point in time, it appears that the options for addressing North Korea's nuclear ambitions fall into the categories of bad and worse.
- At the same time, there has been no lessening of nuclear threats in South Asia. India's relations with Pakistan are at a low point with no movement in 2016 due to terrorist activity. While in the last elections Pakistan had voted for better relations with India, public opinion swung the other way.
- And, there has been a sharpening of positions over the South China Seas threatening confrontation between leading regional powers.

Meanwhile, the global backdrop to these regional challenges does not offer much in the way of optimism.

We are now confronting a world that has changed rather dramatically, even in just the last few years when new obstacles and uncertainties have added to what we all recognize are persistent and pernicious challenges. We now have:

- Worsening relations between the West and Russia. Not only are prospects for further bilateral arms control completely stalled, but the risks of miscommunication and military confrontation are on the rise.
- Ramping up of costly and in many cases ill-advised nuclear modernization programs in all nuclear weapon states.
- Sustained dangerous high-alert postures and first use policies.
- Uncertainty about how the Trump administration's shifting policy statements and actions will impact global security.
- And, continued stagnation on specific important steps on the disarmament agenda, such as entry into force of the CTBT and negotiation of an FMCT.

All of this serves to underline the vital importance of the APLN as the only entity in this region focused on nuclear issues. It also underscores the importance of bringing together high-level thinkers in regional networks around the world. We have done that successfully in Europe and Latin America. Today, in addition to the APLN, we have:

- The London-based European Leadership Network for which I serve as the Convener. We currently have 180 members and a broad global security agenda.
- The Latin American Leadership Network based in Buenos Aires with 20 members across Latin America and the Caribbean.
- And, we are currently working to develop a similar network for the Africa region.

Taken together, nearly 300 leaders around the world have joined these vibrant networks. They bring together global thought leaders, including experts, practitioners, policy makers, and scientists committed to promoting dialogue and action on reducing global dangers. The networks serve as important platforms to help influence regional and national policies; educate decision makers; increase public awareness; and activate new regional voices in the global debate.

My consistent experience is that public awareness depends on one's experiences. My generation, who lived through the Cuban Missile Crisis, had our awareness heightened by that experience. While I do not wish that upon my own children or future generations, if we are to increase public awareness we need to make those generations "feel" the sense of threat that we know exists – in my view.

These nonpartisan leadership networks have been part of NTI's vision since its inception and they remain key priority. They exist because, as members and supporters of the networks, we recognize that there is insufficient attention paid to the range of nuclear threats by our publics and politicians.

We know that nuclear weapons are a symptom of our broader regional security challenges – and to address these challenges, we need dialogue and engagement to build confidence and trust between countries.

As most of my own involvement in the networks has been through the ELN, I thought it might be helpful to use my remarks this evening to share a few of the lessons that we have learned:

- First, the ELN as an organization does not have a view on issues. Instead we celebrate and encourage diversity of participation. We understand that we can't get anywhere just sharing the same views amongst ourselves. We all need to be exposed to different perspectives, and we must be united in our willingness to factor in different viewpoints and try to find common solutions.
- Second, addressing nuclear dangers remains a central concern and priority, but the ELN approach reflects our belief that nuclear weapons are a symptom of wider security problem in

Europe and not just a contributing cause of those problems. This approach has helped make the ELN a relevant policy player on a range of regional security issues as well as in global nuclear debates.

- And, third and perhaps most important – the success and health of the network ultimately depends on our members. There are several tools that our Secretariats use to encourage member engagement, including blogs, policy papers, and meetings. But, we also depend on our members to take their own initiative and work on ideas for issues and activities they believe are important in their countries. These include taking the time and making the commitment to write opinion pieces or provide interviews to the news media. Even mentioning the network or nuclear issues when giving speeches or in their private and personal communications is vital to helping raise our visibility.

And of course one thing that all of our networks share is dedicated staff in our secretariats who believe in our mission and work tirelessly to help us achieve our goals – and I know we are all grateful for their energy and hard work.

So, looking ahead. Some days, it is clearly difficult to envision how we can rebuild the trust and confidence we need to make progress on nonproliferation and disarmament – but, as I have said many times and in many forums, we will not always be in this moment, and we must be ready to take advantage when the opportunities to make progress arrive. And they will.

I have dedicated this phase of my public life to the pursuit of multilateral nuclear disarmament, improved non-proliferation and nuclear material security. The more I do this, the more convinced I am that those – and I include everyone in this room in this number – who support this agenda are in the significant majority. Those of us who believe in a mutual security which does not depend on deterrence based on the fear of the devastating destruction of nuclear weapons are in the majority. At the last Munich Security Conference, NTI hosted a lunch focused on an agenda of practical suggestions for co-operative working on matters of common interest across the Euro-Atlantic space. The geopolitical environment there could not be less appealing for such co-operation, but we were overwhelmed by the response to our invitations. There are those present here who were in that dining room and they will confirm that, apart from the presence of our normal NGO partners, there were 7 Foreign Ministers, 2 Presidents and many other senior political leaders and experts, almost all of whom engaged in a positive way in a discussion of our objectives.

We must never forget that we are in the majority and that our view of a world of mutual security should therefore prevail.

Regional voices are vital and the leadership networks play a critical role in developing regional solutions to our regional challenges. The APLN has made a tremendously important contribution, and I thank you all for investing in the future of the network. I appreciate the invitation to join you for this meeting, and both I and my colleagues at NTI and at the ELN look forward to our future collaboration.

Des Browne, more formally known as Lord Browne of Ladyton, is a lawyer and a British Labour Party politician. From 1997 until 2010, he was a Member of Parliament. Among other ministerial offices, he served as the United Kingdom's Chief Secretary to the Treasury from 2005 to 2006, Secretary of State for Defence from 2006 to 2008 and, at the same time, as Secretary of State for Scotland from 2007 to 2008. A member of the House of Lords since 2010, he is also Vice Chairman of the Washington, D.C.-based Nuclear Threat Initiative, an NGO that works globally to reduce the threats posed by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and disruption. Lord Browne also is a co-founder and the Chair of the Executive Board of the European Leadership Network.

He presented this speech at the official dinner in the APLN 7th Annual Meeting on May 30th.