

Document-Editorial

The United Nations Workshop for Peace on the 70th Anniversary. Let us keep Peace & the Doomsday Clock's moves in perspective – Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals

*Liviu Olteanu*²

The UN was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell.

Dag Hammarskjold, Second UN Secretary-General

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² Dr. Liviu Olteanu is a member and researcher of the Human Rights Institute of the Faculty of Law, Complutense University, Madrid. He is also an attorney and professor. In his capacity as the Secretary General of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty (AIDLR) based in Switzerland, Mr. Olteanu is an observer and representative to the United Nations in Geneva, New York, and Vienna, to the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg as well as to the O.S.C.E. He is director/editor in chief of the „Conscience & Liberty“ magazine. Liviu Olteanu received his Doctor in Law degree “Summa Cum Laude” with a dissertation on “Origins and Horizon of the Fight for Religious Liberty. The United Nations and Diplomacy in Action for the Protection of Religious Liberty”.

1. Introduction

The violence has been a coexistent feature of human civilizations and the world in which we live today is one of systematic *group* violence, where religions, as well as racial, ethnic, or territorial divisions are used to foment fighting, terrorism, and, sometimes, even genocide. Indeed, global violence clustered around systematically cultivated divisions has a huge presence in contemporary life across the world. Advances in science and technology have also increased the catastrophic potential of such violence, even if not necessarily in the context of nuclear, chemical or biological warfare, as 9/11 has shown.³

Wallace Harrison wrote in 1947, the world hopes for a *symbol of peace*. We have given them a “*workshop for peace*”.

For seven decades, the United Nations has been working around the world and around the clock to confront the emergencies of the day while setting the foundations for a better tomorrow. Peace, development and human rights are the interrelated and mutually reinforcing pillars of our efforts, Ban Ki-moon wrote recently on the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. According to the UN Secretary General, the 70th anniversary “finds an organization with major achievements to its credit, daunting challenges ahead, and a dedicated staff striving to bring the ideals and objectives of the United Nations Charter to life”.

For a deeper look on some of these issues – global challenges and attitudes – we have prepared an important trilogy on “human rights, history of liberty, differences or diversity, freedom of religion and freedom of expression, religious minorities, and peace”.

2. Theme milestones and actors for peace

The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty (AIDLR) proposed some years ago a trilogy on “Worldwide Human Rights and Religious Liberty – A New Equilibrium or New Challenges” to be published by the yearly AIDLR’s ‘Conscience & Liberty’ journal.

³ According to Amartya Sen (chairperson), *Civil Paths to Peace* chapter 1 on: *Why do respect and understanding matter?*

a) **The first volume** got the title of the trilogy, “**Worldwide Human Rights and Religious Liberty – A New Equilibrium or New Challenges**” and was *dedicated in the context of two anniversaries: 313-2013, 1700 years since the Edict of Milan, and 1948-2013, 65 years of the “Conscience and Liberty” journal.* Through that volume, we joined the special support in favor of religious freedom, expressed by great international public figures: Eleanor Roosevelt, Rene Cassin, Edgar Faure, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Mari Robinson, Dr. Jean Nusbaum, Javier Perez de Cuellar, Boutros Boutros Ghali, Kofi Annan, Ban Ki-moon and the ambassadors and international experts: Navi Pillay, Laura Dupuy, Petru Dumitriu, Robert Seiple, Heiner Bielefeldt, Mohamad Talbi, Mgr. Pietro Pavan, Mgr. Timiadis, all of them being distinguished advocates for human rights with a particular contribution to the topic of freedom of religion or belief.

b) **The second volume**, dedicated to the “**History of Liberty and Respect for Differences**”, focused on “*Great Masters of Humankind on Liberty and Liberty of Conscience and Religion*” such as: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Muhammad, Gandhi, Voltaire, Luther, Jean Hus, Marie Duran, Roger Williams, Solzhenitsyn, Gala Galaction, John Paul II, Hans Kung, Beart Beach. Also, we illustrated in both editions (volumes I & II) two special and exclusive interviews of the UN Special Rapporteurs: Heiner Bielefeldt and Rita Izsak. An approach from the perspective of academia, religious leaders, and civil society about the need of education and pluralism on religious liberty was emphasized by prestigious scholars and authors like Bruno Vertallier, Harald Mueller, Tiziano Rimoldi, Jose Miguel Serrano, Pierre Lanarez, Gianfranco Rossi, G. Diop, M. Verfaillie, James Vaughn, G. I. Rotaru, J. Graz, Harry Kuhalampi, L. Olteanu.

c) Within the current volume – the third one – especially, we talk about “**Agents & Ambassadors for Peace**” with a focus on *protecting persons, freedom of religion, religious minorities and freedom of expression, against violence and terrorism in the name of religion.* We recommend the interview of the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister H.E. Mr. Bogdan Aurescu; the articles or statements of H.E. Ambassador Omar Saif Ghobash; H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General; H.E. Mr. R’ad Zeid al-Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; H.E. Ms. Federica Mogherini High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission; H.E. Mr. Martin Lidegaard, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark; H.E. Ambassador

Mr. Peter Sørensen, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva; professor Heiner Bielefeldt, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; the articles of international scholars and experts: Natan Lerner, W. Cole Durham Jr., Jose Miguel Serrano, Rik Torfs, Silvio Ferrari, Rafael Palomino, James E. Wood Jr., Florian Sartorio, Winfried Noack, Jacques Doukhan, R. Minnerath, Alexey Kozhemyakov, J. Rossell Granados, Janusz Symonides, Günther Gebhardt, Alphonse Maillot, Susan Kerr, L. Olteanu; or Nicolas Berdyaev, Alphonse Maillot and so on.

Here are some of the topics the 3rd volume deals with: “*Liberty: its origins and horizons – behavior & trends*”; “*Religious minorities, freedom of religion and freedom of expression: different perspectives*”; “*Religions & religious liberty as agents for peace and security*”; “*Tolerance in favour of diversity, a path to religious liberty – winning the war of ideas*” and “*Freedom of religion and freedom of expression’s documents, statements, meetings*”.

As we can identify in this book, there are different categories of “agents and ambassadors for peace”; there are diplomats to the world, stakeholders, organizations, institutions, bodies, policy makers, religious leaders, civil society, scholars, writers, media representatives, personalities that globally or regionally had or have a special contribution and influence for peace through their life and work.

Before examining some “*Agents and Diplomats to the World*” as important actors for the peace, I invite you, first of all, to some reflections on the “*Doomsday Clock*”.

3. “Doomsday Clock”⁴ on issues of concern

a) *The threat of nuclear war was growing again on a scale measured in months or years.* Those who rule among the nuclear-war-armed states appear comfortable approaching disarmament on a time scale measured in generations – and show no interest in taking up the task again any time

4 The Doomsday Clock is a symbolic clock face representing a countdown to possible global catastrophe (e.g. nuclear war or climate change). It has been maintained since 1947 by the members of the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists who are in turn advised by the Governing Board and the Board of Sponsors, including 18 Nobel Laureates. The closer they set the Clock to midnight, the closer the scientists believe the world is to global disaster (Wikipedia).

soon.⁵ A vibrant global civil society movement, shocked at the devastation of WWI, pressured political leaders into seeking *global peace* and disarmament. Later, during the final stages of WWII the Allies began planning for the post-war order, determined to ensure their security and not repeat the mistakes of the post-WWI Versailles peace. Among the Allies' political leadership were serious differences about how would it be achieved. There were pressures to revert to the great power-dominate *real politik* along the lines of the Concert of Europe that had governed European relations during the 19th Century. Stalin wanted to divide the world into great power "spheres of influence", and Churchill and De Gaulle were determined to reestablish their countries as colonial powers. Nevertheless, there was a strong interest in establishing liberal institutions of international orders that would *resolve disputes through diplomacy and law at the UN*.⁶

b) *In Cold War days*, the imminent threat of nuclear destruction made nations wary of their own as well as their adversaries' weapons. Lower levels of arms made sense as a way both to reduce risks of accidentally sparking war and of limiting the destructiveness of war if it came. Nations often talked of seeking "sufficiency" or "minimum" levels in their defense planning.⁷ While the use of even one nuclear bomb would kill and maim the vast majority of people in a region and render a city uninhabitable, the current use of powerful conventional weapons in war is killing hundreds of thousands, destroying cities, collapsing societies in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, and spurring migrations that are causing suffering and disruption in nearly all countries of the world.⁸

c) *Instability and suffering are spreading and the world responds with disturbing paralysis*. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Peter Maurer, have issued an unprecedented joint warning about

5 Andrew Lichterman, Senior Research Adviser, from the presentation of the Western States Legal Foundation on *The Challenge of Disarmament: Still Nonviolence or Nonexistence*, UN Headquarters, New York, October 2015.

6 Matthew Bolton, *Time for a Discursive Rehabilitation: A Brief History of General and Complete Disarmament*, at the Seminar *Comprehensive Approaches for Disarmament in the 21st Century. Rethinking General and Complete Disarmament*, New York headquarters, on 21st October 2015

7 H.E. Ambassador Alyson JK Bailes, former British Foreign Service on *GCD and Defense Policies*

8 Dr. Kennette Benedict, Article on *Setting the Doomsday Clock...*, submitted at the UN in New York on 21 October 2015.

the impact of today's conflicts on civilians and appealed for urgent and concrete action to address human suffering and insecurity. The two leaders stressed the importance of respect for international humanitarian law in order to stem the chaos and prevent further instability. "Rarely before have we witnessed so many people on the move, so much instability, so much suffering. In armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, combatants are defying humanity's most fundamental norms. Every day, we hear of civilians being killed and wounded in violation of the basic rules of international humanitarian law, and with total impunity. Instability is spreading. Suffering is growing. Almost sixty million people around the world have been displaced from their homes because of conflict and violence – the highest figure since the Second World War. Conflicts have become more protracted, meaning that many displaced people face years away from their homes, communities and livelihoods said Mr Maurer. "In the face of blatant inhumanity, the world has responded with disturbing paralysis," said the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. "This flouts the very *raison d'être* of the United Nations. The world must reaffirm its humanity and uphold its commitments under international humanitarian law. Today we speak with one voice to urge all States to take immediate, concrete steps to ease the plight of civilians."⁹

d) **Control of conflict and pursuit of peace.** "The future we want", the open working group's proposals for the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)¹⁰, sets out as Goal 16 to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development..." The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) states "conflict remains the biggest threat to human development with fragile and conflict-affected countries typically experiencing the highest poverty rates."¹¹ The UN has a set forth and supported many actions toward control of conflict and pursuit of peace. Approaches to preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention are important for maintaining the peaceful and inclusive societies in which goals towards "the world we want" can best be pursued.¹² Global initiatives will be needed to support positive advance

9 UN News, Geneva on 31 October 2015.

10 UN document A/68/970, available at <http://undocs.org/A/68/970>

11 UN The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 DPI/2594E.

12 Sir Richard Jolly, Special Adviser UN Development Programme and Deputy Executive Director UN Children's Fund, Article on *Sustainable Development Goals: The Need for Peacebuilding and Measures of Disarmament*, submitted at the UN in New York October 21, 2015.

but also to prevent setbacks by tackling such threats as those from climate chaos, famine and agriculture instabilities, cross-border health pandemics. Surges in migration and human trafficking also need regional and global action on a scale far beyond what is envisaged at present. Migration is partly a consequence of conflict and human rights abuses and partly of growing inequalities in a world of rising ambitions and global awareness.

d) *Freedom of expression, freedom of religion, religious minorities and refugees are under a strong attack from extremism, religious fundamentalism and terrorism in the name of religion*, which is perpetuated in large territories of the world, with a special impact on the Middle East and Northern Africa; in Syria and Iraq, in Nigeria, Soudan and South Soudan etc., the children and women, the Christians, Yezidis and other religious minorities are suffering, persecuted and killed almost every day. The terrorist attacks of Christians or other minorities and beliefs, affect the world, and request a coordinated strategy and serious answer of the international community and Security Council.

e) *The clock is ticking*. The Doomsday Clock is an indicator of how close we are to catastrophe from technologies of own invention. Nuclear weapons can cause nearly apocalyptic damage in a very short time. Without all-out efforts to bring an end to the use of powerful conventional weapons to deal with conflicts of interest, that is, without general and complete disarmament, we are doomed to life with increasing instability, human suffering, and even the end of civilization as we know it. The clock is ticking.¹³ The Doomsday Clock is ticking too from the daily catastrophes of extremism, terrorism, climate chaos, poverty, famine, pandemics, human rights abuses and growing inequalities.

4. Agents, Messengers of Peace and Ambassadors for Peace

In 1981, the General Assembly proclaimed that on the opening day of its regular session every year, an International Day of Peace should be celebrated to honor and strengthen ideals for peace among all the world's nations. The Peace Day now occurs on the same date each year, September 21. Who are the international and regional contributors that offer a special support as agents and ambassadors for peace?

¹³ Kennette Benedict, *ibid.*

a) I would like to start this list by observing and appreciating what is being done yearly by the **Nobel Prize Foundation**, through **Nobel Peace Prize**. Thorbjørn Jagland, Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, a peacemaker in the Council of Europe and worldwide had a special role in this regard. The world needs multiplied examples of diplomats, policy makers, NGOs and civil society representatives, academia and religious leaders speaking clearly and loudly for freedom of religion and peace, as are doing today so many people, diplomats, scholars and religious leaders; Pope Francis, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Queen Sofia of the Kingdom of Spain, Katrina Lantos Sweet, Adama Dieng, Prince Ra'ad Zeid, Heiner Bielefeldt, Valeriu Ghiletschi, etc. These are only some examples. In a rapidly changing world, the AIDLR is constantly striving to enhance effectiveness – by its expertise, actions and events, and by the Conscience & Liberty journals too, wants to be a consistently international agent and “ambassador” for peace and liberty; for that reason, AIDLR proposes to the world, to defend God given human rights, and the principle of religious freedom for all people, and to support governments and international organizations in their efforts for a better world of peace. Also there are many other organizations and universities that are supporting human rights, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and international dialogue for liberty and peace, i.e.: Amnesty International, HRWF, IRLA, CSW, EPRID, HRW, Open Doors International, EEA, ADF, USCIRF, Int’l Center for Law and Religious Studies, Center for Interfaith & Cultural Dialogue Griffith University, University Notre Dame Sydney, Human Rights Institute at University Complutense Madrid, Religious Freedom Program at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University, Yale, Oxford, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, etc. *Always on the peace issue, the vigilance makes the difference and every person matters.*

b) **United Nations and regional organisations.** The United Nations and other regional organizations developed a “diplomacy in action” with a multitude of bodies or organs, entities, organizations and commissions, committees, departments and offices, agents and diplomats, all of them fighting together for peace and dignity; some of the most representative are the UN Secretaries General, the Security Council, the General Assembly from New York, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner, the Human Rights Council from Geneva, the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect, the

UNESCO, the Special Representatives of Secretary General of the UN and the Special Rapporteurs; also there are regional organizations: Council of Europe with Secretary General and Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union with its High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ms Mogherini, the European Parliament; all of them belong to the “*global workshop for peace*”.¹⁴ The other *agents for peace* ought to be the politicians – national parliaments and governments; also, we have to include: academia, civil society, non governmental organizations – by their strong advocacy for social justice, education and training on human rights and fundamental freedoms; the culture, religions, human rights defenders, media – as opinion makers – all of them together, have or could have an important impact for world’s peace, liberty and security.

This last volume of our trilogy “Agents and Ambassadors for Peace”, stresses concretely on “Liberty, Tolerance, Religions and Religious Minorities” as agents of peace and giving a special attention to “*protecting freedom of religion and freedom of expression against violence in the name of religion*”.

c) United Nations as Worldwide Arbiter of Disputes & Protector of the Peace – Politicians & diplomats to the world:

Franklin D. Roosevelt

What the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt underlined on 13 April 1945, has the same or more value today. He said: “*We seek peace – enduring peace. More than an end to war, we want an end to the beginnings of all wars – yes, an end to the brutal, inhumane, and thoroughly impractical method of settling the differences between governments. Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships – the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, of peace*”.

Roosevelt truly believed in the possibility of a world governed by democratic processes, with an international organization serving as an arbiter of disputes and protector of the peace. The Atlantic Charter was

¹⁴ From the exhibition organized at the UN Headquarters in New York, on October 2015, in connection with the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations.

the second attempt by the Allied Nations to draft an agreement to promote international cooperation and security, after the Inter-Allied Declaration of June 1941. Between 1941 and 1945, at a series of international meetings attended by a growing number of Allied Nations – in Teheran, Moscow, Bretton Woods, Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta, the principles of peace, security, international justice, self-determination and human rights were discussed, refined and developed, hereby laying the ground for, as the Atlantic Charter puts it, “the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security”: the United Nations.

Harry S. Truman

Also Harry S. Truman in his Address from 25 April 1945 to the United Nations Conference in San Francisco said: It is not the purpose of this Conference to draft a treaty of peace in the old sense of that term. It is not our assignment to settle specific questions of territories, boundaries, citizenship and reparations. This Conference will devote its energies and its labours exclusively to the single problem of *setting up the essential organization to keep the peace*. You are to write the fundamental charter. Also Wallace Harrison, UN Director of Planning wrote in 1947: For the people who have lived through Dunquerque, Warsaw, Stalingrad, Hiroshima, may we build so simply, honestly and cleanly that it will inspire the United Nations, who are today building a new world, to build this world on the same pattern... The world hopes for a *symbol of peace*. We have given them a “*workshop for peace*”.

Kofi Annan

Kofi Annan as UN Secretary General talking about the people who sacrificed their lives in the cause of peace, emphasized: “The United Nations was founded by men and women who *dreamt of peace* because they knew the cost of war. We, in our time have also witnessed friends and colleagues pay the ultimate price in the cause of peace. Our fallen colleagues went out into the world with the conviction that their service could make a difference between war and peace, poverty and security, oppression and freedom. They showed in their work and in their lives that human conflict is not inevitable, that poverty can be defeated, and that the promise of peace and tolerance exists among all peoples. Whether clerical worker, lawyer, driver or special representative, Iraqi or international civil servant, each of these men and women made a unique and invaluable contribution.”

Ban Ki-moon

According to Ban Ki-moon, “Creating the United Nations required intense efforts to bridge differences and viewpoints among countries following the end of the Second World War. Through negotiation and dialogue, the 51 founding members of the Organization in 1945 established an enduring *global instrument for peace*, security and human progress... In 2015, at the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, Ki-moon said that “the UN comes at a time of great transition for the human family – one that offers a momentous opportunity to address these threats by mobilizing global action to secure our shared future. A global population of an estimated 2.3 billion in 1945 has grown to more than 7 billion. In such an irreversibly interconnected world, challenges faced by one become challenges faced by all – sometimes gradually but often suddenly. This is the global logic of our times. I want to bring the sense of hope and solidarity to people in need today and to ensure that the United Nations is an effective instrument of progress and dignity for all. That is my seventieth-anniversary commitment to the world’s people.”

d) Dag Hammerskjold and the UN Meditation & Prayer Room – A Different Approach to Support Peace Building

Dag Hammerskjold UN Secretary General expressed in 1957 an atypical perspective, which can have an impact supporting the peace; he personally planned and supervised in every detail the creation of the ‘United Nations Meditation Room’ as it exists today and he wrote the following text inscribed on a wall facing UN headquarters in New York – regarding this special – and necessary – room of prayer and meditation for peace.

“We all have within us a centre of stillness surrounded by silence. This house (n.r. United Nations), dedicated to work and debate in the service of peace, should have one room dedicated to *silence* in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense. It has been the aim to create in this small room a place where the doors may open to the infinite lands of thought and prayer. People of many faiths will meet here, and for that reason none of the symbols to which we are accustomed in our meditation could be used. However, there are simple things, which speak to us all with the same language. We have sought for such things and we believe that we have found them in the shaft of light striking the shimmering surface of solid rock. So,

in the middle of the room we see a symbol of how, daily, the light of the skies gives life to the earth on which we stand, a symbol to many of us of how the light of the spirit gives life to matter. But the stone in the middle of the room has more to tell us. We may see it as an altar, empty not because there is no God, not because it is an altar to an unknown god, but because it is dedicated to the God whom man worships under many names and in many forms. The stone in the middle of the room reminds us also of the firm and permanent in a world of movement and change. The block of iron ore has the weight and solidity of the everlasting. It is a reminder of that cornerstone of endurance and faith on which all human endeavour must be based.

The material of the stone leads our thoughts to the necessity for choice between destruction and construction, between war and peace. Of iron man has forged his swords, of iron he has also made his ploughshares. Of iron he has constructed tanks, but of iron he has likewise built homes for man. The block of iron ore is part of the wealth we have inherited on this earth of ours. How are we to use it?

The shaft of light strikes the stone in a room of utter simplicity. There are no other symbols; there is nothing to distract our attention or to break in on the stillness within ourselves. When our eyes travel from these symbols to the front wall they meet a simple pattern opening up the room to the harmony, freedom and balance of space. There is an ancient saying that the sense of a vessel is not in its shell but in the void. So it is with this room. It is for those who come here to fill the void with what they find in their centre of stillness”.

5. Future we want to live

We need to remember and to support the Preamble of the UN Charter, which underlines:

“We the people of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good

neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all people, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims. Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations”.

Thanks to the United Nations for still being a “workshop for peace” to everyone, everywhere and for taking care of human rights and security. Thanks to all diplomats of the world and to stakeholders’ efforts in favour of a better life, liberty and peace.

*In words inscribed too on a wall facing UN headquarters in New York, the Hebrew prophet **Isaiah** (2:4 NRSV) envisioned a world in which **people would beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks** – converting the economy of militarism to one of peace. The UN Charter supports this horizon. Article 26 of the Charter calls for the maintenance of international *peace* and *security* with the least diversion of human and economic resources for armaments.¹⁵*



Dr. Liviu Olteanu – Secretary General of the International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, at the side-event organized in Geneva, during the 26th Session of UN HRC by AIDLR and co-sponsored by the Council of Europe, Uruguay, Canada, Spain, and Norway

15 H.E. Ambassador Paul Meyer, Keynote on Hard and Soft Linkages between Nuclear and Conventional Disarmament, at the UN General Assembly, October 2015.