

**Unofficial transcript**

**His Excellency Mr. Óscar Arias Sánchez,**

**President of the Republic of Costa Rica** (spoke in Spanish)

I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words in a place so emblematic of international order in the nuclear age. The Security Council is the product of a mixture of stupor and hope, the harvest of an atrocious fear that led to faith in a peaceful destiny for the human race. This institution was founded on the promise that we would be able to sleep peacefully following the most abominable of wars - a promise, reflected in Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, that the Security Council would promote "the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources".

That promise has yet to be fulfilled. While we sleep, death is awake. Death keeps watch from the warehouses that store more than 23,000 nuclear warheads, like 23,000 eyes open and waiting for a moment of carelessness. Death is incited and spurred on by those who perfect weapons of mass destruction instead of destroying them, and by those who each year allocate tens of billions of dollars to vertical proliferation. Death is courted by fundamentalists and megalomaniacs, radicals and populists, who sustain their power with gunpowder.

I thank President Barack Obama for the opportunity to discuss the reduction of nuclear weapons in the world. A large group of Nobel peace laureates has gone even farther. For years, we have lobbied for the total abolition of nuclear weapons, because we believe that they run counter to the survival instinct of every species. However, it does not seem plausible to discuss disarmament so long as not even existing agreements are being honoured; so long as there are countries that resist ratifying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; so long as some hide data, store fissile material and reject international verification mechanisms, shielded behind their sovereign status; so long as nuclear tests continue to take place; and so long as this Security Council maintains its silence before widely known secrets, such as the clandestine network of proliferation of nuclear supplies, led with impunity from Pakistan by Abdul Qadeer Khan in open mockery of the logic underlying

resolution 1540 (2004).

It does not seem plausible to speak of a safer world so long as the proliferation of other types of weapons remains in its perennial second-place position on our international agenda. This Council fails in its historic mission every day that it turns a blind eye to the rampant arms race. The world spends \$3.5 billion every day on weapons and soldiers. Each year, more than \$42 billion in conventional arms are sold to developing nations, where weak or non-existent democracies are incapable of satisfying the most basic needs of their peoples. Even in Latin America, which has never been more peaceful or more democratic, this year nearly \$60 billion will be allocated to military spending - this in a region with an average of seven years of schooling for its population, and poverty that affects more than 200 million inhabitants.

That is why I ask that we approve the arms trade treaty that my Government has presented to this Organization. If it is legitimate for us to worry about the possibility that terrorist networks may gain access to a nuclear weapon, it is also legitimate for us to worry about the rifles, grenades and machine guns that are given into their hands. Who said that killing thousands in one blow is worse than killing thousands every day?

Twenty years ago, I visited the United Nations during my first presidential term. In those days, we talked about a world without nuclear warheads, a world in which we would finally control the weapons that fuelled wars between brothers. I have come back again as a modern-day Rip Van Winkle, to find that everything has changed - everything except that. Peace remains just out of reach. Nuclear and conventional weapons continue to exist, despite all the promises. It is up to us to ensure that 20 years from now we do not awaken to the same terrors we suffer today.

I am not unaware of the fact that the world's biggest arms sellers are represented here. But today I speak not to the makers of arms, but to the leaders of humanity, who have the responsibility to put principles before utilitarian considerations, and make good on the promise of a future where - finally - we can sleep in peace.