

„The Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons”, Oslo, 4-5 March 2013

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Thank you Mr. Chairman,

First of all, I would like to thank the Norwegian Government for organizing this Conference. It is indeed an important and timely Conference. And it is in fact long overdue that the humanitarian consequences are the focus of such a Conference. It is of course also a very good opportunity for a dialogue among government representatives, experts and members of civil society.

The Swiss authorities have long been worried about the catastrophic effects of nuclear detonations, whatever the causes of the detonation might be. As a small country, we are particularly worried about possible existential effects of such an explosion.

Our experts and government authorities have been looking at some concrete scenarios. And we would like to share some facts to add to the discussion and to what we have already heard in the expert presentations.

For example in 2006, a Swiss government scenario estimated that a 20KT explosion in the center of our capital Bern would instantly kill every human being within a radius of 1km. Within 2km, fatalities would be widespread. On the first day alone, several ten thousand people would die. And this, I think, is very much in line with what we have heard from the Norwegian experts. In the centre of our capital we have a lot of critical federal infrastructure which would be affected. A lot of the responders who would actually have to respond in such a situation would also be located in the affected zone, so that it would not be possible to deliver any effective response to the victims.

But also an explosion in a neighbouring country would have an impact on Switzerland. For example a scenario based on a 20KT explosion 50km beyond our borders, resulting in large amounts of radioactive dust travelling towards Switzerland,

shows that a large area would be affected and that it would take a multi-year-multi-billion operation to clean up this contamination.

The estimate of what would happen is based on a variety of factors: Air burst, ground burst, population density etc... So in order to prepare for this Conference, we have asked our CBRN experts in the Spiez laboratory to look at a relatively small 1KT explosion, as well as a relatively large bomb of 1MT - just to have an idea of the range of destruction and the consequences. I would like to just share with you one last figure: if we look at a 1KT explosion and if we look at the population density of our cities we would probably have to expect between 3000 to 10'000 immediately dead in cities like Zurich or Geneva and of course there would be many more victims in a wider area away from the explosion. This underlines that even a relatively small nuclear detonation will have unacceptable humanitarian consequences.

To sum up, our own scenarios that our experts have calculated clearly confirm that the detonation of a nuclear device – even a small nuclear device – would have unacceptable and potentially catastrophic humanitarian consequences. So this really underlines the message that everything has to be done to prevent this from actually happening.