

Mr. Finlay:

It is a great honour for me to address this special meeting of the Security Council. Since 2004, my organization — the Stimson Center — has had the distinction of supporting the work of six successive Chairs of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004). In those 12 years, hastened largely by the forces of globalization, it is astonishing to reflect upon the breadth of advancement witnessed around the globe.

For millions, these advances have made the world a far more hospitable place. In the past 12 years, Governments and non-governmental actors alike have conspired to help cut the world's extreme poverty rate in half. More girls are in school, fewer children are dying as a result of preventable illness, and the world continues to make advances against the scourge of global diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDS. Further, despite the horrific and headline-grabbing conflicts of today, the inexorable arc of conflict and violence is bending, however gradually, toward peace.

Those accomplishments trace their lineage to our growing global interconnectedness and the successful efforts of this organ and others to steer the forces of globalization towards universal benefit. Sadly, positive advances in science and technology, along with the democratization of modernity around the globe, have also hastened non-State actors with ill intent, at worst facilitating access to the world's most dangerous weapons and technologies of mass destruction.

In that regard, resolution 1540 (2004) has provided a near unprecedented rallying point for global efforts to prevent terrorist acquisition of these heinous weapons. In a global security environment experiencing a poverty of optimism, the resolution and the 1540 Committee have demonstrated an enviable return on our joint political and financial investment. I believe that when the history of our time is written, the Committee's efforts on our behalf will be recognized as a glowing example of what is best about the human spirit — a willingness to accept our common and interconnected interest in peace, security and mutual prosperity.

Regrettably, even as globalization has extended the benefits of prosperity, so too has it fundamentally altered the drivers of proliferation and insecurity. Today, the value of global trade has doubled, driving access to nefarious technologies to distant corners of the globe. In the past 12 years, private capital flows have doubled, opening new opportunities for malicious actors to conceal illicit financial flows. Today, 47 per cent of the world's inhabitants have access to the internet and, prospectively, illicit intangible technology transfers — up from just 12 per cent in 2004, and we have witnessed a steady increase in nuclear, biological, and chemical incidents around the globe — including notably, by non-State actors.

Accordingly, it is clear that despite the progress Committee 1540 has engendered, our central challenge remains unmet. However, it is not a moment for despondency. Rather, it is a clarion call to celebrate our successes in the face of overwhelming challenges, and to redouble our efforts with the clear-eyed knowledge that a weapon of mass destruction incident anywhere in the world will have both sweeping security and economic ramifications for every State represented in the Chamber.

The Government of Spain should be deeply proud. Under your leadership, Mr. President, the Council has widened interest in and access to the resolution by constituencies beyond national Governments once thought tangential to the objectives of the resolution. That is an extraordinary accomplishment. Yet, even as we celebrate these advances, there are two key priorities that remain unaddressed.

First, it is clear that the institution of the United Nations, in the face of this impossible mandate, is wildly overburdened. With a global mandate, the 1540 Committee and nine experts cannot hope to keep pace with the evolving proliferation landscape, nor the activities and demands of 193 Member States.

In the course of that review, the Government of Canada presented a proposal calling for targeted implementation support of the 1540 Committee. Assistance can come not only from official entities — law enforcement, customs and border control agencies — but also from legal specialists, civil society analysts, industry leaders and, as we have seen, even student scholars who represent the next generation of global leadership. I believe that civil society could present a no-cost additive support mechanism that would work with national authorities to identify critical risks and capacity gaps, develop actionable requests for assistance from Member States, and work with the Committee to match those requests with donors or even provide that assistance directly.

Secondly, it has become trite to note that the proliferation threat has grown, but we have yet to concede that no Government — not even a confederation of like-minded Governments — can hope to address the inexorable march towards proliferation. Only by inculcating civil society, industry and the general public with shared values and a recognition of mutual benefit can we hope to meet the tide of proliferation concern.

Here, too, there is progress. The Government of Finland paved the way with an innovative whole-of-society approach to implementing the resolution, particularly in countries of the Global South. Their dual-benefit approach allows for a better pairing of assistance offered in the name of resolution 1540 (2004) with other higher-priority security and development objectives of Member States. The Government of Finland's approach should be scaled and replicated, and Helsinki should be commended for its innovation. In closing, we know that the world can change in the blink of an eye. I

commend this organ for doing what it can, where it can to keep the world's most dangerous weapons out of the world's most dangerous hands.