



BELARUS

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**United Nations General Assembly
71st session
Brainstorming session
"Responsible governance, disarmament and non-proliferation
for progress and sustainable development"**

New York, January 23, 2017

**Introductory remarks
by Valentin Rybakov
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of the Republic of Belarus**

Belarus was pleased to join efforts with Kazakhstan, Suriname and UN Development Programme in organising this informal session on **issues that probably cut across the entire work of the United Nations**. Not simply because we love side-events but rather because we always try to make use of any possibility to bring different people views and perspectives together to collectively think about what's important.

What we suggested to think about today is extremely important. **Sustainable development is impossible without peace and security**. The people of Belarus have fully appreciated this absolute truth by their own fate. In the past century, Belarus came to be a place of the bloodiest battles of the two world wars. To us as a relatively young sovereign nation these memories are not abstract notions. It is through preserving peace, political and social stability, non-discrimination that we could succeed in the development domain. And vice versa: the sustainable development efforts help maintain social cohesion, avoid conflicts and instabilities.

Let me remind you of one of our national examples of interrelation between responsible governance and sustainable development. **Twenty years ago Belarus completed the withdrawal from its territory of the nuclear weapons** that remained after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without any kind of preconditions or reservations, Belarus renounced its military nuclear capability, signaling its commitment to peace and security and, indeed, setting the tone for subsequent nuclear disarmament processes in the post-Soviet space. The process entailed political and economic consequences and required huge financial and human resources. Nonetheless, Belarus demonstrated its resolve and firm commitment to the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

Today, 20 years later I tend to think of this decision as **a major change in the national mindset**. It demonstrated in practice that responsible national governance on such issues as disarmament and non-proliferation can and should be a prerequisite for progress and sustainable development.

I am sure that every country could cite examples of responsible national policies in disarmament, non-proliferation or security that had positive effect on national development. However, - and here I am maybe a little provocative - I have an impression that **at the global UN level there is little understanding of interconnectedness and interdependence of different aspects of our work**. What we do every year is sometimes justifiably seen as repetition of meetings, processes and documents. We must overcome this attitude and we should do it not only in terms of technical and bureaucratic nature of our work at the United Nations. We should equally do it in substance. I am glad that there are different attempts to do so, including the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to convene tomorrow the high-level dialogue on synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace. Without synergetic approach we run the risk of leaving the sustainable development agenda hostage to our routines isolated not only

from the real world but also from other UN dimensions such as peace, disarmament, non-proliferation.

I think I will try to stop here with my introductory remarks and setting the stage for this session. Let me close with a few questions that I hope we can collectively address during this informal meeting:

- What new ideas and initiatives to contribute to universal push for sustainable development through interdisciplinary dialogue within the UN system?
- How can we overcome existing isolation of different UN topics and structures and to address them in combination with other living processes of the UN, especially with the achievement of sustainable development?
- What can contribute to creation of atmosphere of dialogue and mutual respect whereby progressive development in all its diversity would receive higher priority than military considerations?