

**ISODARCO XXVII Winter Course**  
**NUCLEAR GOVERNANCE:**  
**PROSPECTS FOR A STRENGTHENED NONPROLIFERATION REGIME**

**Andalo (Trento), Italy**

**8 – 15 January 2014**

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The International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts (Isodarco) recently hosted its 27<sup>th</sup> annual winter course, entitled “Nuclear Governance: prospects for a strengthened nonproliferation regime” at the Hotel Gruppo Brenta in Andalo, Italy. Participants and lecturers from various countries arrived 8 January 2014 and lectures commenced on 9 January. The final presentations took place on Tuesday, 14 January 2014.

The course brought together senior experts on nuclear weapons and nuclear energy issues to deliver presentations on topics related to nuclear governance. Students from Europe, the United States, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia attended the course. Most students had either completed their graduate studies or were in the process of doing so.

Each working day included three formal presentations: one in the morning and two in the afternoon. In addition, conference participants had the opportunity to organize informal presentations on nuclear governance-related topics of their choosing during unscheduled time and the after dinner evening session. Each session lasted 90 minutes. After a presentation of 45 minutes with remarks from one or more senior expert, audience members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments for another 45 minutes. Younger participants in particular were encouraged to ask questions.

The first presentations introduced the students to basic topics in nuclear technology, politics, and history. This gave students a foundation for understanding the complex risks and opportunities of the nuclear age. One presenter also encouraged students to consider the ethical and moral aspects of nuclear weapons possession and use.

Other presentations discussed the international institutions, agreements, and mechanisms that are currently in place to limit the spread of nuclear weapons and encourage the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology for the benefit of mankind. The discussion covered institutions like the International Atomic Energy Agency, which (among other functions) inspects nuclear facilities in many countries around the world to detect illegal nuclear weapons programs.

Several of the panels described the perspectives of those states that already possess nuclear weapons, including those currently outside of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Special focus was given to the views of the United States, Russia, France, and

Pakistan. Discussions also touched on attitudes towards nuclear weapons in the United Kingdom, China, India, North Korea, and Israel. Each of these countries took a unique path to acquiring nuclear weapons, and there is an ongoing debate in each one (in some cases involving civil society) about the future role that nuclear weapons can and should play.

Several presentations focused on those countries that may one day choose to acquire nuclear weapons, including the technological and political factors involved in a decision to do so. Much of the discussion focused on Iran, and course participants analyzed the recent interim agreement between Iran and the so-called "P5+1" (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, and Germany) to reassure the international community that Iran is not attempting to acquire nuclear weapons. Many participants expressed optimism that a final, permanent agreement was possible to guarantee that Iran would never get nuclear weapons, but many remained concerned that a nuclear-armed Iran was still a future possibility.

Another prominent nuclear challenge is the North Korean nuclear weapons program. Panelists discussed the history of the North Korean nuclear program, its eventual decision to seek nuclear weapons, and the future of the North Korean threat to its neighbors and to the West. Certain presentations discussed the tools possessed by the international community to monitor and verify North Korean nuclear activities, including the 2006, 2009, and 2013 nuclear tests. Among these tools are sensors that can detect tremors underneath the earth's surface. Technical experts present described the ways in which nuclear tests are distinguishable from earthquakes, in addition to many other issues.

Certain presentations focused on the role of nuclear weapons in specific regions. For instance, two speakers described the role that nuclear weapons play in the ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan. Another presentation described the prospects for a "Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East," agreed to by all of the nations in the region. Nuclear policies in the European context were also discussed in detail, including European plans to participate in global nuclear weapons diplomacy as well as existing mechanisms to regulate civilian nuclear power among European countries.

Several panels focused on the unique challenges associated with verifying the nuclear capabilities possessed by particular states. Verification is currently carried out by several organizations at the state and international level. Several speakers described the challenges faced by inspectors, including constrained or ambiguous legal authority, uncooperative governments, and resource constraints. At the same time, however, the technology that makes verification possible is increasing, though one participant pointed out that the technologies required for nuclear proliferation are also becoming more easily available to states and potentially to terrorist groups.

Many of the speakers made recommendations for individual actions that states with nuclear technology could take to improve global nuclear governance.

Recommendations included greater transparency, more robust funding for international inspectors, and a commitment by Russia and the United States to accelerate nuclear weapons reductions. Many of the speakers expressed an interest in moving towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and described some of the steps that would be necessary to achieve this long-term goal.

Some of the presentations were delivered by Italian experts and academics, which provided course participants with a sense of Italian views on nuclear issues, though this was not a main focus of the course.

Several recreational activities were organized during the course. These included a visit to the MART museum in Rovereto, which hosted an exhibition of works by Antonello da Messina.