

Opening Statement

by

Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

Interactive Meeting

with

Dr. (Ms.) Louise Arbour

President of International Crisis Group (ICG)

at

Sapru House, New Delhi

October 4, 2012

It is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished Chief Guest today as well as other members of her delegation namely, Mr. Jonathan Prentice, Senior Policy Advisor and Ms. Anagha Neelakantan, Senior Analyst. We greatly appreciate that Dr. Arbour has found time from her busy schedule for an informal dialogue with us which will be conducted on the basis of Chatham House rules. The theme of the dialogue is 'Peace and Security in a changing world.'

2. As our guests would know, ICWA is this country's oldest and prestigious think tank on foreign policy and broad issues of international relations. Established a few years before India's independence under the inspiration of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, it has contributed immensely to the study, research, public debate and outreach activities pertaining to its central mandate. It continues to perform its role as 'an institution of national importance', the special status accorded to it by the Parliament of India. It is financially supported by Ministry of External Affairs but optimal enjoys autonomy in thought, programming and action.

3. We are aware of the exceptional standing and reputation of ICG as an international, independent and non-profit NGO. Its mission is to study, prevent and resolve conflicts. It was established in 1995, and it focuses on a number of broad questions such as peace and justice, gender and conflict, climate change and conflict and R2P. ICG is famous for its three-fold role i.e. conducting field research, crafting policy prescriptions and analysis, and conducting high-level advocacy. On a personal note, I should mention that as a student of developments in Africa and Southeast Asia, I have gained much from ICG products. May I request you, Madam, to convey my personal appreciation to your relevant team members who produce reports on Myanmar? They figure among the world's best and most credible analyses of developments in a highly complex environment.

4. ICG's world view is as broad as that of ICWA. Looking at your wide-ranging mandate and interests as well as the intellectual and professional backgrounds of Indian scholars, former diplomats and members of the strategic community gathered here today, may I suggest that the Middle East and North Africa, particularly evolution of the 'Arab Spring' and its future directions; the situation in Afghanistan; and the

question of China's recent actions and reactions in East Asia may be of special mutual interest. Our side would, of course, be happy to respond to questions that you and your colleagues may wish to raise on issues relating to South Asia as well as other regions or subjects.

5. Let me now introduce Dr. Arbour to you formally.

6. Dear friends, I especially enjoyed reading one of the recent speeches by Dr. Arbour and also listening to her last night at the India International Centre. She is convinced about fundamental changes to the power balance in today's world. She says flatly: 'The past decade has seen power shift dramatically east and south.' Another significant point she makes is that while 'war may be on the retreat', 'the overall decline in war is due not to fewer conflicts starting, but to more ending.' She is known for giving the 'story straight' because ICG's fundamental approach is that 'you need to understand a conflict to resolve it.'

7. Once again, Dr. Arbour, a very warm welcome to you. The floor is yours.
