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**Oral History Interview with Jean duPreez**

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**Summary:**

Member of South Africa's delegation to the 1995 NPT review conference.

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Jean duPreez

South Africa

Oral history interview conducted by Michal Michal Onderco in person in Monterey, CA on 4 April 2018

MICHAL ONDERCO: Good morning and thank you very much, again, for agreeing to do this interview with us. As said before, the transcription of our discussion will be made available to you prior to publication and you will have an opportunity to review it for correctness and completeness. I would like to start at the beginning of the story, and I would like to ask you to situate me in your position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the time in South Africa.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity. I am a former South African diplomat and at the time prior to the '95 [NPT] Review and Extension Conference, also returning from diplomatic assignment in Washington D.C., I was part of a small group of officials that started under the leadership of now Ambassador Peter Goosen, a unit in the department dealing with non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

This was flowing from South Africa's succession to the NPT, assigning the Chemical Weapons Convention, as a result of the doors opening given the changes that were unfolding in South Africa at the time. This was prior to the '94 democratic elections, but already part during the, or taking place under margins of the negotiations that were taking place. So it was a time of transformation.

And I think one also needs to look at it in the context of that South Africa just in '93, April '93 announced the abolishment of its nuclear weapons program. And then, of course, in the bigger picture of the world, the changes regionally, peace in the region, but also internationally. So you've got to see that in the bigger context.

So here we were a very small unit working both in the context of dismantling and also I was involved with the tail end of the dismantlement process, both on the nuclear and the missile side, but working closely with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Obviously liaising closely with the United States and the United Kingdom, to some extent some of the others, [nuclear] weapon states, but probably those two in terms of getting access to the international organizations, the regimes.

With Peter Goosen, we wrote the non-proliferation policy that was actually one of the very first, if not the first, government, cabinet policy memorandum adopted which laid out very specifically what South Africa's policy in this regard should be. And it continues to be, I believe, the guiding principle. Membership of all the treaties, organizations, export control regimes, etc., etc. Implement strong controls, be responsible possessor of advanced technology. So in that context, I was jack of all trades.

The body grew - still be a very small group. It fitted into a multilateral division that was very small, dealt with the UN. So we were kind of a sub-directorate dealing with these issues. Peter Goosen at the time was a diplomat in Geneva, assigned to the Conference on Disarmament. South Africa was just becoming or aspiring to become a member of the conference, but working on the side.

This was the time of the negotiations, the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. So a lot was going on. There was also negotiations dealing with the Biological Weapons Convention, trying to establish a verification to that. So this was a time to be

involved. There were lots of opportunities. So we found ourselves in a very steep learning curve.

So I dealt with chemical and biological missile issues primarily. And then a colleague of mine who returned from Vienna, Johan Kellerman [phonetic], who is now the director for this, what then was actually a sub-directorate, for a variety of reasons could not particularly handle the NPT file and I was asked to assist with that, which kind of brought me back full circle to some of the things that I did at university.

And so when the NPT review extension conference came up, South Africa participated in the PrepComs leading up to that conference, but in a very, very low key manner bearing in mind the way South Africa was at the time. So 91 - accession to the NPT.

The first PrepCom, and I'm sure you know this, but the PrepComs in those days were not substantial PrepComs. They were procedural meetings. And I think there were four, if I remember correctly and two were held in '93 and two in '94. I might have these numbers incorrect. And so they were also, one was in New York and Vienna. And so these meetings were basically attended by the missions.

And I remember being in Washington while there was a meeting in New York and I recall that the discussions that were going on - well, you know, we are still developing our policies. This was literally weeks after the announcement made by de Klerk, that South Africa had a nuclear program. So you know, people didn't really expect South Africa to be a player.

So right about September, I think, of '94 in that area, bearing in mind what happened in April of '94 with the elections, the adoption of new policy, all sorts of things, there was another PrepCom and Peter Goosen attended. I think it was held in Geneva, but you know, correct me. And Peter came back with a number of concrete ideas, but this was a time when the pressures for the extension part was being put on.

And I seem to recall - well, I know this for a fact, that we asked for a legal opinion from the state legal advisors. And this was going back into the history. There were, in the consultation process - now remember, South Africa has joined the non-aligned movement in '94, prior to that was a complete pariah.

Anecdotally, we remained a pariah within the NAM for quite a while, particularly as a result of what happened in '95. But wanted to reach out, obviously we tried to consult with as many NAM countries, but in particularly African countries. And one of the issues that came up in '94 at the PrepCom was the options for review, option for extension, I beg your pardon. And I think it was Nigeria, if I remember correctly, who asked for a legal opinion.

Now the NPT is serviced, then even lesser than today, by the Office of Disarmament Affairs, or then the Department of Disarmament Affairs in New York as a secretariat. So you know, for member states to ask for a legal opinion, who you ask, the UN can't give the legal opinion.

So Peter came back with this idea - well, we need to get the state legal advisor to get us a legal opinion. With all respect to colleagues at that point, I don't think they knew a thing what this was about. I remember the legal opinion coming back and it was not - we sent it back.

But this was - and why I'm emphasizing this so much, it gave rise to a suspicion that South Africa had a position that it went, based on this legal opinion. And that that position was misleading some of the non-aligned and that that position was then

somehow reversed as a result of pressure from the U.S. and others. Well, that is complete utter nonsense. But just moving on, so the legal opinion was simply that, but it was in response to a request.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But that legal opinion was presented at the third PrepCom in Geneva in December, 1994.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yes.

MICHAL ONDERCO: And it had basically three options, right? And then there was, what South Africa became famous for, it was the third option. There was the rolling extension. Before I go on to talk about the third option, I want to ask you whether you have - so you said the first draft of the legal opinion was rubbish and it had to be sent back. So how did the actual presentable document come about?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, I mean, it was not say, rubbish, but it was not the kind of document or the kind, would not have been something that was going to be -

MICHAL ONDERCO: But your office was involved then in the drafting of the final document?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Not as much. This was an opinion that came down and we kind of wanted to put it in context. And obviously the legal advisors didn't have the benefit of being at the meeting. I didn't go to the meeting - Peter was the one who attended the meetings. And prior meetings, the Ambassador, and I think the Ambassador was - substituting officials from New York weighing and so on. But they hardly spoke.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So how big was the group of people who were thinking about the NPT extension around that time, so December, 1994? How many people were sort of involved with that dossier? There was you, there was Peter Goosen - who else was there?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Four.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay, so there was you -

JEAN DUPREEZ: Goosen, Kellerman and then the guy who was in charge of us all, Tom Wheeler.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: He was the then chief director for the UN division.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So did you have any deliberations or also contact with the senior leadership, like with people like Rusty Evans [director general at South Africa's Ministry of Foreign Affairs] or with the minister?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, not really. This was prior to the need for policy.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And that's why it's important to realize that the, this legal opinion was in response to a request by Nigeria who asked for a legal opinion. And I seem to

recall the Peter thought it would be a good idea to take this. Now coming from a country with all this background and Nelson Mandela was just elected. This was considered to be an option, but actually it had a legal basis.

And if you look carefully and if you analyze Article X, which I think is - people tend to forget about the history of the NPT. It has two articles and the two articles are linked. But you also have to think why they are linked. One is the withdrawal clause and the other one is the extension clause. And it is interesting to go back in the history of the NPT to see who are the ones who proposed the withdrawal clause. That is one of the European countries, I seem to recall The Netherlands was one, and the Italians were the other. And that was basically linked.

After 25 years, if we see things aren't going well, we are going to pull out because we may want to acquire our own nuclear weapons. So that was the thinking of the time. So if you move that forward to the context of '95 and you just throw it out to a complete legal opinion based on what is written in Article X, you don't see that context. And you kind of see there are three options, all right? So the options in there was indefinite extension, one term of extension or some part of all of it.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: In fact, you know, I'm sure you want to keep this in the front of following for order, but when we then finally presented to the powers options for them to decide, we were low diplomats on the totem pole, we laid out eight options. If you unpackage the three options in the article, I think it was eight options.

So especially if you consider what was already transpiring in the background and different groups, different subgroups, different countries putting down proposals. Like Nigeria, for instance, thought that there must be a one-time extension, 10 to 15 years. Mexico was floating around what we commonly used to call as the red light approach. That there should be another video extension conference after 25 years to decide not to [continue with the treaty]. Our legal opinion was a green light, which was a cutoff.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But there was also, was there also the position that you favored or that the department favored?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, there was none, in my opinion on this was there was no particular, at that point, favoring. Because you can't, there was no policy memorandum sent up.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So actually I have, as I mentioned, we have these documents from the department and one of the documents that is there is the document that you wrote for the Minister on the 27th of February. I have a copy for you. And in that document -

JEAN DUPREEZ: Oh, what I wrote - oh my gosh. Then it must be absolute gospel truth.

MICHAL ONDERCO: In that memo you basically suggested there is -

JEAN DUPREEZ: Oh, Frank Land was involved, okay. Sorry, it was another guide was involved, yeah.

MICHAL ONDERCO: On page four under point 1.3, you said "it is recommended South Africa should support the rolling extension of successive fixed periods which will be

extended through in perpetuity, but were a positive vote be required of each of the succeeding periods.”

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yes.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So was that the preference that you had at that time?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, if I wrote it, it must be true. I mean, come on. As I said, from the beginning, my memory is a little bit rusty here. Hold on. I think what this suggests more clearly is that we need to maintain the flexibility. And that this was an option.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, it says the flexibility should be maintained by the length of the period.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, but ... By the way, this was, as far as I am concerned, this was never approved.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay. But you wrote it, so you probably knew - it reflected probably what you thought at that time was the best policy. And I mean, frankly the suggestion that you made about why this is actually important to maintain the pressure, it makes complete sense in the light of that period. So I just was wondering whether at that time there was a sort of, a discussion about what should be proposed or whether that was -

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, there was a discussion, but you know, I think you need to understand sort of the dynamics in the department, the government department of this nature. And I forgot about Mr. Frank Land, completely lost contact with him. So the hierarchy was Tom Wheeler was the chief director, Frank Land was the director and then under him was me. But in effect, in terms of the thinking of the policy and so on, Peter was the driving force.

So did we have a major brainstorming session with Land and Wheeler, other than sitting maybe in office discussing some ideas? No. Did Peter come back as the guy in the field with some reports, many reports about this is what the non-aligned and this ...? Yes. Did we get -

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, you were, and I mean, Peter admits that, and Tom Graham admits that and Graham also writes about in his book that there was a very strong lobbying pressure from the United States on South Africa.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, but you have to sort of backtrack. Because if you look at the dates -

MICHAL ONDERCO: This is '95 and the American pressure comes already in '94.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, but not as much.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well in his book he remembers that he visited South Africa and Velindaba in 1994, in the summer of 1994.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, that has nothing to do with this.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, he said that he was talking about the extension. That's what he says in the book.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, but he went to Velindaba for a different reason.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: That was part of dismantlement. Yeah, he did come, but let's separate this pressure because I have specific views on that and was really involved with many of those aspects. From the chronology of how things transpired, so by the time of this memorandum, and I do remember this memo quite clearly -

MICHAL ONDERCO: You also wrote a follow-up to it.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, this was the -- this was after that legal opinion was written. And I think I recall that because it was positive feedback to this legal opinion, this is what was driving this. I could honestly not recall whether this was ever approved. I do not think that this was approved at the minister's level.

MICHAL ONDERCO: And mostly because the minister was not involved at that time, or was it because the minister was not interested or did this, this was not an agenda of importance?

JEAN DUPREEZ: I think it was that, it was stuck at the director general's level.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So that general was Rusty Evans at that time.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah. Now there's something that I have reflected on in the years since, and this comes to your question about external pressures. So you know, the likes of Tom Graham came to South Africa. We were obviously demarched and this was kind of, they were very delicate in trying to this in the early stages. What transpired at a more senior level, we were never informed. We had very little idea of it, except when this arrived on my desk. [Shows a letter on an iPad]

And what this told me or suggested to me at the time - February 13th of '95 this letter arrived and in fact, I have the original copy of it. This was a letter addressed to Nelson Mandela from Bill Clinton. Subsequent to this letter, I learned that there was a letter from Al Gore to Thabo Mbeki. There was a letter from [General Colin] Powell to Thabo Mbeki and I have copies of those. Very interesting letters.

This letter, when I used to teach or actually even lectures on the NPT, I could give you a whole talk about this, just this letter itself and what was in there. The reason why I highlight this letter in the context of the pressure was this letter arrived at the presidency; they didn't know what it was. It was sent down as a result of the letter that was also sent to Al Gore, from Al Gore to Mbeki, it was sent down through the deputy president's office. And I remember this very well and this is not reflected in any of this. The legal advisor to the deputy president, his name was Gumbi, I forget her first name now.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Was it Leslie?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, this was a woman. At the time Leslie was in Washington, he was my counterpart in Washington - in New York, sorry, at the Permanent Mission. What was her name? But she was a legal advisor to the deputy president. She called me up. You know, you're a deputy director - kind of very low in the hierarchy of the department. And suddenly you get a call from the legal advisor from the deputy president's office.

And I remember correctly that she was kind of - she said, you know, we've received this letter. What is this NPT conference and what is this and blah, blah, blah. And so, knowing that after these kind of memos things are going to come down, this was for us an opportunity - this is why I'm mentioning this - to break this loose because it was stuck somewhere.

And so, my first call was Peter and I said to Peter, what now? And so, after some discussions he said, why don't you suggest that a meeting be held? Now you have a direct line of communication, which I used. And as a result of that, and that I'm not sure is documented anyway, a meeting was held.

MICHAL ONDERCO: A meeting on the 1 April?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Before we go and talk about the meeting on the 1 April, I want to come back and talk about this letter. Because also in March, then Thabo Mbeki went to the United States and had a meeting with Al Gore. Did they talk about the NPT extension?

JEAN DUPREEZ: We were not privy to that, so, I have my own theories about it. But what is important to, also in the context, is that Thabo Mbeki and Al Gore co-chaired a commission.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yeah, Bi-National Commission, yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And that Bi-National Commission - you know more about my country's history than I do.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, I spent the past two years tracking this case down, so.

JEAN DUPREEZ: The Bi-National Commission had many subcommittees and things like that. It was one on this cooperation. And I think one has to look back to the dismantlement - destruction period, even before. There's a long history of U.S.-South African cooperation, cooperation in Angola. This foreign reactor came from the United States, kind of in my view looking the other way, vetoing in the Security Council, you know. So there's been a long sort of path here.

So, the U.S. - U.S. experts were intimately involved in the dismantlement process. They were - this is something that I personally was tasked to oversee involving destroying our missile space program, missiles, what you want. So there were weekly contacts. And so in terms of this commission that was set up, this was also to facilitate. You know, they were - there were negotiations to enter the NSG and the MTCR, and the U.S. support for that was critical and they laid down some conditions. The foreign minister was involved. The former - Pik Botha was involved at that point. Promises were made, promises were not kept.

And so this commission was set up to kind of put us on a bit of an equal field. Now, what happened in that meeting in Washington, we don't know. I have think a different context but in the same sort of genre of issues. There were meetings held with President Bush, there were meetings held with President Obama, where things were said.

And then when we came back it was told this was - hang up, this is not going to happen. I don't want to suggest that senior politicians and heads of state, and foreign

ministers, don't know what they're talking about, but sometimes in these meetings things come up that your head of state or foreign minister are not necessarily prepared for, but the other side is, because they always are.

And so, this at the time was not an issue or really an issue for us to push at that high level. But Thabo Mbeki was a shrewd politician. And so, you know, did he make a promise, did he suggest something to the Vice President? I don't know. But at that time, this letter, these letters were already there.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Did they give any relevance to them, did they give them any importance?

JEAN DUPREEZ: There was, as a result of the meeting that was held at the state Guest House, a draft response was prepared to the Gore letter.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And that, you know, I helped run it and that was an indication of what South Africa's support will be. And by addressing some of the stuff that, the Gore letter and the Clinton letter were - had some of the evidence of it. And that's where the conditionalities came in.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So, I want to get to that in a minute. But before, I want to come back to this document and to thinking about this sort of green light extension. And in that document you basically - and also in the legal opinion - there is a discussion about how long should that period be. And there was discussion where you, I think in this document it says that Americans might be prepared, open for 25 years extension, whereas the non-aligned would like to have a 5 year extension. What was guiding your thinking at that time?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, I mean we never thought, and I think we made it very clear, even in the non-aligned, but also discussions with the U.S., any period shorter than 25 years would be irresponsible and unrealistic because I cannot see how you can give the treaty a chance to prove itself. And I mean I think I recall, and you know, it's interesting how - and just on a bit of a sidebar - I'm thinking of actually writing a piece in preparation for the 2020 conference.

And I'm going to make this argument that had there been a rolling extension of 25 years, we would have been faced with the same situation today as we would have faced with then. And if you look back, when the '95 conference looked, and how we thought about the success of the treaty, there were only two failures of the treaty at that point, two: Iraq and North Korea.

And so, you can't review the, you can't review the effectiveness of a treaty over five years, and just say, well, five years and it won't work. There were also legal issues with that if you basically would suggest that the treaty would come to an end in five years.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But that would that's essentially the heart of the whole green light mechanism, right? So once the treaty comes to a review again, and it's not extended, the treaty comes to an end.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, provided you give it a proper time for review.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay, so in that memo you wrote fifteen years should be the

position that South Africa should allocate.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, well that was not -- In hindsight, that was not something that I would ascribe to today.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: That was not - I seem to recall that that was as a result of some discussions with, perhaps some senior people. You know, if you said you're right, these memos, I mean, at the end what goes up is not exactly what you wrote. But fifteen years, I've never, I remember the fifteen year thing. This was because Nigeria had this idea and Africa, Nigeria was the big player in Africa at the time on this issue. I would not then and I would not now sort of sign off on, personally sign off on it. I think it would remain [unintelligible]

MICHAL ONDERCO: So one of the things that you also are saying in this document is that Mr. Minty should be involved in the delegation. You write it here. And the delegation is saying -

JEAN DUPREEZ: Which one was this now?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yeah, the longer one, so not the response.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah.

MICHAL ONDERCO: How was the cooperation going on at that time between Mr. Goosen and Mr. Minty and you?

JEAN DUPREEZ: There was none.

MICHAL ONDERCO: There was none?

JEAN DUPREEZ: As I said from the outset -- Mr. Minty was a known person to all of us. Given his, it would have been years of advocacy work in the nuclear field, especially also on trying to isolate the government at the time on its nuclear policies, etc., etc. So, we knew about him. I have never met him until the day that he walked into my office asking to see some of the documents. Honestly I don't recall whether that was at the end of '94 or the beginning - probably at the end of '94. If I close my eyes I can still see that whole event. And I think he was after some of these memos and some of the documents, including demarches and things that you could see. Honestly, I don't even recall having received any written demarches at that point, prior to these letters, down to our level.

So, Mr. Minty came and wanted to see these documents. At the time these documents were confidential. I didn't know who he was, or where he fitted in, other than him saying he's an advisor to the minister, and we left it at that. Given that he was an advisor to the minister and I was told to include him, he was included in the delegation.

Of course, you could imagine this is a department in transformation. You have a junior, mid-level official sitting there at the desk. You have his boss and his boss, all whites from the old department, with their boss, white from the old department, and then the political branch from the ANC.

So this was clear and - potentially career inhibiting moves that you made in those days, so you were very careful on how you navigated the waters. So suddenly Abdul Minty shows up. You're not going to argue that he shouldn't be on the delegation.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But would he, for example, receive the legal memo, the legal opinion?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No. no. He was not part of the department.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay. So, let's - we already alluded -

JEAN DUPREEZ: Up to a certain point.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, he then became a member of the department after the conference when he joined the ministry.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yes, but I'm talking about even before when we went to these meetings, the meetings in the Guest House.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes. So this is a good moment to go and talk about the meeting at the Guest House. So you already said that you came there and proposed eight different solutions. There was eight - well, there was when it was sort of the three options were subdivided, it came up to eight different solutions. And the outcome of that meeting was that there should be an indefinite extension. What happened in between?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, first, I'd like to get an understanding, you've interviewed several other people.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: You know, what, and you mentioned Abdul Minty, what his recollection of this was? I'm not asking that to dispute what he said, but something to refresh my own memory. Because - and a lot transpired, it was a closed meeting. There were only a very few people involved and certain tasks were given as a result and not everyone agreed.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So, this is the summary of the meeting. And one of the things that Mr. Minty mentioned in that, in his interview was that in that meeting essentially that it was, the position was outlined by the political leadership that there will be an indefinite extension. So he didn't remember much of the, even the discussion about what are the other options to for the extension.

JEAN DUPREEZ: They were not, and I will tell you why because favored one-time extension. That's what Abdul Minty was in favor - one-time.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But, two weeks ago in Rotterdam, he said that ANC's position has historically always been that the NPT should be extended indefinitely.

JEAN DUPREEZ: As I said.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay. And so, he also had something to say about the follow-up, and I'll get to that in a second. But Ambassador Goosen in his interview basically said that there was a discussion and that at the end of the discussion when the present

options were presented, the chief executive who was present in that meeting, who according to the list of attendees available in this document was Vice President Mbeki, said, I think we should support it - indefinite extension - on the basis that human beings have a right to live in the world free from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

JEAN DUPREEZ: You almost have it right. He didn't used basis, he used principle. He used the word principle.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: That's where the whole principle -

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: But, okay, so this is, in my recollection, what transpired. And I would say that in my kind of career this is one of the low points and the high points and low points of my career and therefore I have a quite a vivid memory of what happened there. But again, you know, it's old and it's a long time ago. So, as time goes by I think this may have slipped my memory or may even have morphed into different ideas.

I do recall that the meeting was set up through the Director General's office, Rusty Evans, who also chaired the meeting. At the meeting from the department, sort of the working level of the department, I recall it was, in addition to Rusty, Tom Wheeler, Frank Land, Peter, myself, and I think Johan Kellerman was there, I was not sure. I'm not sure. And there may or may have been, that Nic von Wiellight was there too. Nic von Wiellight was our technical advisor who was with the Atomic Energy Commission. And if you read, he published a book a few years ago, The Bomb.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes, The Bomb.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And I think there's reference to this in there. So, I think, because Nick was always kind of our go-to guy.

MICHAL ONDERCO: He was the technical expert on safeguards, correct?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah. He was the guy that oversaw and kind of he was in charge of the enrichment originally. But then when the dismantlement, he was the safeguard.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: So, we would have likely had Nick there [unintelligible]. Then you had, and I remember there was this strange table in this room, it was kind of an oval shaped, so the chair would be sitting on the top. We were all sitting on the department side, on this side. And of course the politicians were all sitting on that side.

So you had Rusty chairing, but they you had the Deputy President, you had his advisor, you had Alfred Nzo who was at that point getting sort of on in age. You had Abdul. And I don't know if there were any more. There may have been one or two more people. But there were, I would say there were not more than a dozen people in this meeting. And so, we prepared a number of documents. You know, obviously, the base documents, I think I've had them all, and I have them at home.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Did Minty prepare a document?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, he - no, he didn't. No, I don't recall any. But we prepared something back on the documents. They were documents, the NPT, all these kind of things. And Peter and I the night before, on a chart - I wish I knew what happened to that chart - in sort of columns, we had the options for extension starting with indefinite.

And then what we did is we had the indefinite, then we had kind of the countries in favor, countries opposed, and I think consequences or something, I seem to recall like that. And as I recall, I think there were eight. It was the indefinite extension, and there was the various options for rollovers.

So, well there was first of all a 25-year extension. That was it. So that's two. Then there were the two more clear options, there were kind of what became known as the South African Greenlight Option, and the Mexican Redlight Option. But there was an Indonesian Option as well, but then there was a Venezuelan Option floating around, too. Then there was a Nigerian Option of sort of the five to fifteen year type of thing.

And then there was this one-time extension. I remember we didn't clearly identify whose this was, but as it was known, this was Abdul. And I remember the Deputy President looking at this, and he kind of was saying what are the consequences of these things? So we did have a discussion. Of course the indefinite extension is different. What are the - that there are other options, and that the potential consequences of that. And the consequences of all of them - I mean, it was interesting that the Mexican approach, I mean, taking the decision not to extend - it was not, never clear whether this was going by consensus or with a majority vote.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And so, in years since, I have argued that that option would never have worked. Because just like the U.S. and through their proxy Canada pushed for an indefinite extension by getting people to sign their little resolution, the same kind of pressures would have been brought up.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And so, you would have the same result, other than you would have put the treaty in a bit of an uncertainty, you know. So, these are the kind of things I think that Thabo Mbeki kind of looked at. Now, did he come prepared to that meeting or came to that meeting with the idea that, well, he needs to find a way to support the indefinite extension? I don't know. I think it's quite possible. Did we give him all the options? Yes, we did. Did he consult everyone at that meeting? Yes, he did.

I remember him going down the table and he, I remember, got into Alfred Nzo and by that time we were under the impression that Nzo had seen these things and he didn't. I remember Alfred Nzo leaning back and he says, "Abdul, what do you say?" And Abdul was pushing sort of the more NAM position. Abdul made the point very forcefully and also correctly, that if you decide to join the non-aligned, the non-aligned has been on the forefront for these issues; they were preparing for the meeting with Bandung.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And they are still meeting, which I think was, I guess, South Africa's first ministerial of the NAM. And one that's also - I don't know how familiar you are

with the NAM decision making dynamics, but it's quite interesting. It's a body of 114-odd countries, but on these issues is about 10 countries, even fewer made the decisions. And once it's made on an official's level or ambassador level, then it kind of flies through the rest all the way up to the head of state and then it became NAM policy. So, you know, to say that you disagree with NAM policy, meaning you disagree with about eight or ten countries.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: So, you know, this was Abdul's spiel, and I'm not criticizing him from what he's saying, he was presenting that view that we as the technocrats in this kind of thing, did not have. And if you want me to - ask me a question right at the end, what do I think today, then we can go into that. So, he was presenting a very lone wolf position and he was - that position was not supported by the deputy president.

MICHAL ONDERCO: When the deputy president decided that he wants to support indefinite extension, did that surprise you?

JEAN DUPREEZ: I kind of think it did. I would be interested to know what Peter said about it. Because, things that we would have set up, and you know. So I must say thinking back that it may have surprised me, but at the time, you know, we're talking about twenty-odd years ago. What did Peter say about it?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, he said it was sort of turned around, so as if a very unexpected thing. He said basically Vice President Mbeki just turned around and said, no, we will support indefinite -

JEAN DUPREEZ: I mean, you know, I remember this in the context of what he said; what he said is that, and this is, we wrote the speech that Nzo made in New York on that, and we vote subsequent things and there's still a kind of lurking inside of South African statements today. That South Africa gave up nuclear weapons on the principle that nuclear weapons - a world without nuclear weapons provides security, and not nuclear weapons.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And the principle of freedom and democracy and so on and so one. It was all the principle. And so, I think, you know, he took that decision. And I remember there was, I think it was a lunch or a break, we then came back. And it was then, but, okay, we have a number of things going. Upcoming was a NAM senior officials meeting that was two weeks prior to the review conference. Towards the end of that meeting was the Bandung conference that coincided with the opening of the Review Conference. And so we had to - and then of course there were these letters that he felt that we should respond to.

Now, we can all speculate, and one of my thoughts over the years was, he had to respond to these letters. He had to respond to the letters in a positive way but also not to be seen to be kowtowing to the United States. And I would find it, I guess where I take issue with a lot of these, what I call Johnny-come-latelies.

It's amazing to me how many people have done PhD studies on this - sorry, I guess, policies that were not even involved in these issues at all. But you know, that's fine, but they changed the context of history. And it would appear from those things that, you know, the whites that were at the time in the department and were controlling South Africa's nuclear history or nuclear industry wanted to support the United States. I think it was quite the opposite, in fact. I can give you one example of that

later on if you want. But - he saw a bigger picture here today. He's an economist, and I think he saw a bigger picture.

MICHAL ONDERCO: By 'he' you mean Mbeki?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Mbeki. Whether he did so to satisfy the United States, I would dispute. I think he just saw the bigger picture. I would strongly disagree with anyone who suggests that Thabo Mbeki took this decision because Bill Clinton asked Mandela to do so. I know when I was present at other times when Bill Clinton asked Mandela to do so and Mandela basically told him to go away. This was on the landmine treaty for instance. So, I don't think that this was as a result of pressure. This was as a result of seeing the bigger picture. See the bigger picture of the way South Africa is, see the bigger picture of what this treaty means.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But was it also about seeing the bigger picture of what the relations between South Africa and the U.S. might be in the next five to ten years if we go against America on an issue where Americans care about?

JEAN DUPREEZ: I don't think that - I would not think that. Because there were several examples subsequent where South Africa did take that stance, and it didn't really matter. I think it was to position South Africa to be a serious player.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So, in that meeting, you sort of had an idea. Okay, so we will support indefinite extension. But it's not going to be a bare bones extension, there's going to be something on it.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, this is what he - he gave us a very specific instruction. And I remember him looking towards sort of the technocrats. We gave up - this is the issue of taking on principle and so, you guys have to go and figure this out. And this happened on a Saturday afternoon.

MICHAL ONDERCO: And from what I understand from Ambassador Goosen, he gave you 24 hours to come up with something. So, what happened during those 24 hours? Because Ambassador Goosen told me that you and him basically locked themselves up in the room, and that he is typing very slowly so you were thinking and typing at the same time about what to come up with.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yes.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Ambassador Minty told me that since you and Ambassador Goosen were sort of not necessarily aware of everything that was going on from the non-proliferation regime, that ideas about what should be included in the principles and objectives came up from him, and it was then drafted up in a diplomatic language.

JEAN DUPREEZ: That's not true. Goosen and I were tasked to do this; Minty was not. And we were tasked to do so in the presence - not - by the deputy president, but in the presence of all our heads in the department. And so yes, we had - I sat in my office. At that point I think we did not have a director, we had an acting director or something and so that office next to me was vacant. It was an adjoining door.

And was this, Saturday afternoon or I can't remember if it was, we basically forced ourselves, and we said, how the hell are we going to do this? And the only two guiding - we had two guiding points. One, indefinite extension which means it's based on the treaty. It's a legal requirement treaty. And given that, we need to look at principles. What are these principles?

The principles are that we're, the task that we were given is having to support this in principle, in principle. That was the word that was used - in principle. Now, in principle can mean a lot of things. So if I said to you, I support this in principle, it doesn't mean that you can walk out that door and say, you supported it. In principle, meaning that I can add things or change things, in principle, that I can put a 'but'.

But it also means that in this context that there should be principles, principles meaning ideals involved. So, the task that we had was to look at principles in the treaty. And so, you know, while people often look and asked us in the interviews and the subsequent you know, where did you come up with these principles that were then brought to us? And I said, well, there were eight, there were eight principles. What were they? Well, they came from the treaty.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So, some of them made it to the final document and some of them didn't.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yes.

MICHAL ONDERCO: And I will come back to that at a later point. So one of the things that also transpired in a different interview was that Ambassador Goosen had prior to, in earlier discussions, had contacts with Canadians where they were also discussing some of the Canadian initiatives to sort of put a little more flesh on the extension. Did the content of those discussions influence what, how you were thinking about, what should be in principle, in these principles?

JEAN DUPREEZ: You know, if you go to these meetings, and if you - I'm sure if you talk to Chris Westdal - I don't know if you've met Chris Westhall?

MICHAL ONDERCO: I spoke to him on the phone.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah. So Sven definitely, but you know, Sven used to wear this hat. We used to meet in a corner, the dark corners of the UN - Iceland - to exchange ideas. There was another character in this whole thing, the Australians.

So on the margins of these meetings, you know, you have lunches and you have dinners and you have these consultations and people share ideas, all right? And sometimes it's free-flowing ideas. People come away with ideas, saying, oh, I don't know, it's Peter Goosen said this, it must be South Africa's position. No, it's not. You fly a kite and you float ideas. Not all that gets fed back to headquarters.

And I'm not suggesting that it's been held away from you, it's just simply, you know, these are sort of ideas flying around. And again, to come back to the earlier point, it was a very, very small group of people coming out of a sort of a closet of isolation where we were playing around with ideas. That if you look back at it you can say well no, I don't agree with that, but yes that's what we said.

So, the Canadians had some ideas; but the Canadians wanted indefinite extension without conditions. Were they willing to look at other things? But their idea was to have the indefinite extension decision solid on its own. If you read that resolution of them -

MICHAL ONDERCO: That's also what you wrote, right?

JEAN DUPREEZ: What?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Because in the minutes of that meeting, they said the letter should make it clear, the letter to Al Gore, should make it clear that the suggestion for strengthening the review process are not seen as conditions for extension of the treaty.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, hang on. The context of that is, and by the way I will - I sat in a meeting with Tom Graham many, many years later at the Carter Center in Atlanta. Where I don't know if we discussed the NPT, I think we discussed the CTBT. But in the context of this panel, he made it very clear that the principles and objectives set conditions. But what that means is not when the decision is taken that the indefinite extension treaty will, indefinite extension, provided that such and such. That would be conditions.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: That's what that means.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: What we have - we used to - and the word that didn't make it in, which I was, it was a word that I can't remember that came up between Peter and myself, but probably Peter because he thinks in this way - is this lodestar. Okay, so there were two words that we used: a lodestar and a yardstick. So the principles was a lodestar meaning a guiding principle that guides you. We wanted that in. The yardstick was the review process.

And so, if you think about this sort of lodestar idea, it's not so we'd get - we'd take this principle, but we'd keep moving towards the lodestar. You can't say it is a cutoff if you don't; the lodestar will always be there. So anyway, so that's to come back to those conditions.

But you know, I remember we basically took the treaty apart, Articles I and II, the non-proliferation part, all right? That was principle number one. Principle number two was safeguards. Principle number three was peaceful uses, so, Article IV. Principle number V, VI and VII were CTBT, FM[C]T, and dismantle to further disarmament. And we were even talking about, and in the speech, we were talking about a need for a START III or an equivalent type of treaty. And what happened a few years later, right?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Negative security.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Which is - no, no. Nuclear weapon free zones and negative security assurances. And as you know, negative security is not in the treaty.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yeah, I wanted to come back to that, where did it fall.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Negative security assurances have become from that time right through until today one of the leading issues that South Africa has been pushing and the reason for that is obvious. You give up nuclear weapons, you shouldn't be a target of nuclear weapons. Okay? Whether you actually had them to give them up or you chose not to pursue them, are different sides of the same coin.

So, you know, that's what you consistently through South African participation in NPT meetings since then you will find negative security assurances in them. And I think you can argue - I think you can make a very strong argument about it - that nuclear disarmament while an aspired goal by many, may not happen, there's no reason why

negative security assurances could not happen to be given to countries that have no nuclear weapons.

MICHAL ONDERCO: No.

JEAN DUPREEZ: There's no legal basis for not doing, because there was an ICJ case that very clearly states that. So, anyway, so we had to kind of put flesh on these. We've wrote them down that way. And it was, Peter's correct. We sat in two offices talking to each other. And I said, well how about this, yeah, yeah, okay, this. So this is how it came about.

So we presented the deputy president with that, the lodestar, but then also on how to achieve that. And the idea was very simple at the time. It was not, when you found these eight principles, came a paper that we circulated at the review conference at the request of Dhanapala that had twenty-odd principles. And that's where that if you look at the principles and objectives, that's where [unintelligible].

But the review part was a bit sketchy. We had idea of a committee, and just later on, and this is where we kind of started to see eye to eye with the Indonesians, which there was a complete breakdown in our early relationship where the Indonesians came with this idea of more of a two-week, ten day meeting, you know. So, that's where the Prep Com is today, started to take shape.

But the idea was there must be this entity looking at the implementation of these things, which provides this yardstick. This was - I mean, I don't know if it's in these - but this was part of the ideas that were presented to Mbeki. And Mbeki basically gave us the instruction, one to prepare the letter. That was the first thing.

Two, that South Africa should, in participating in the senior meeting of the NAM officials, senior officials in the NAM in New York, convince the non-aligned of its position, but it should also focus specifically on Africa.

The NAM, as I said, has an interesting decision making process. We as officials in the department did not - I did not, and I don't think Peter really understood how that worked. Higher ups may have, but this would have been our first ministerial meeting, so I doubt very much. But there's an interesting consensus rule on the non-aligned. This is not consensus by unanimity; this is consensus by majority rule. So basically no one in the non-aligned should be blocking consensus, especially if you're a newcomer. And so the was sensitivity that South Africa should not find itself in the situation at Bandung --.

MICHAL ONDERCO: In isolation.

JEAN DUPREEZ: To block things. All right?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And in fact, there was a later decision taken. And also the context of when South Africa took over the chairmanship, that South Africa will not block any decisions by the NAM. But to come back to the meeting in New York, so we were given the task of going to that meeting to lobby non-aligned countries to support this kind of position.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: That one, the treaty was important enough not to potentially allow it to disintegrate. But two, that given our numbers, we can push these conditions. In a memo like that it says that they were meant to be political conditions.

MICHAL ONDERCO: And how successful was that attempt?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, Bandung didn't take a decision.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Was that success - was that a good yardstick for your success?

JEAN DUPREEZ: I attended and Peter even more, and I'm sure he would agree with me on this, and I'm sure I would have loved to hear his view on that meeting. I attended many, many, many, many meetings like that in the subsequent years and I've never felt so uncomfortable in any meetings as I felt then. It was a meeting where you had an absolutely unattainable objective.

We did consult; we didn't just walk in there, we consulted very widely. We operated as two officials. Peter and I are the same [unintelligible]. I'm not sure, I don't think Tom went; it was the two of us. The ambassador at the time, who has since passed, Leslie Gumbi [phonetic], who has since passed. So in all respect to them, I will not suggest things that they may or may not have done. But what I will say is this was a very uncomfortable for two officials from the department to arrive there, and at the same time -

MICHAL ONDERCO: Was Mr. Minty there?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, Mr. Minty was not there. I don't recall that he was there.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: I don't know. If you have other information?

MICHAL ONDERCO: No, I don't.

JEAN DUPREEZ: I don't think Minty was there. Minty was, sat on the delegation, but I don't think Minty was there.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So you're saying it was very uncomfortable?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Because we had to set, we had to sell our position that no one wanted to know anything. And the first thing that they would say is, you rolled over in the face of pressure from the United States, and this was not the case. I remember if some of them - and we had - you know, international diplomacy, and especially in this instance, is often based, and especially in this case, based on the characters. Individuals, you know, they represent countries, and sometimes very powerful ones.

But at the time, in sort of '95, 2000 and mostly, they were, in this field, countries threw some of their best diplomats at it. This was the big game in town. And with that you got characters, you really had some very interesting people. And Tom Graham was one, the Berdenikov and people like that. But then you need to look at the foreign minister of Indonesia at the time.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Ali Alatas

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, Ali Alatas. And the guy that - he was instrumental. He later became Indonesian Ambassador in Egypt.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Was it Wisnumurti

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, no, Wisnumurti was there. Anyway, he was the guy, he was really aggressive, and he's unlike most Indonesians that are not aggressive. We had shouting matches with him where it became very uncomfortable. But we had off to the Africans. And what happened at the same time, and this happens often, the French were working the Africans too.

MICHAL ONDERCO: They managed to persuade Benin, right?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah. And in the memo it says that we have to work through the OAU as our first sort of line. We first line as African, and then the non-aligned. I remember sitting with the Nigerians. There was not a lot of support. But unbeknownst to us, the French who were - and we didn't coordinate with the French at all, [unintelligible] with the French. They were working the front fires.

And so, while people, and many people who have tried to write the history argue, well, because we did not allow the senior officials meeting to make a recommendation to Bandung, which led them to this sort of cabal that I call them in the NAM, which was Indonesia, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, or Cuba was not part of the NPT, but in the context of the non-aligned, Egypt, Mexico which was an observer. They decided to push their own agenda as a group of like-minded states, I think. And they got sidelined by the Africans. Because in Bandung, because there was no consensus here.

So while none of the African states came out and said we support South Africa, it was politically not to the advantage to do so, given the past. I think they were quite satisfied that there was no decision. So they allowed us to take the heat. And at the same time when it came to Bandung, and I think Bandung was the weekend before the new conference started.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Bandung started after the conference. It was during the conference, the ministerial.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, but these things have - there's a prior meeting as well. So anyway, it was right at the beginning. So when the senior officials meeting wrapped up, there was no decision, but there was already a growing sort of split in the non-aligned. I don't recall that we had really cared what Bandung did, although we wanted to make sure that Alfred Nzo spoke first and there was a lot of efforts made to change that speech.

MICHAL ONDERCO: In Bandung or in New York?

JEAN DUPREEZ: New York. No, we weren't in Bandung at all.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But in New York - so the speech is basically, in many ways, founded upon the documents that came out of the April meeting because it's, in many ways, it's very similar.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yes.

MICHAL ONDERCO: And it's also very similar to the letters that were sent in to Mbeki

and that were sent to SADC ministers. It does have the inclusion of the principles. So was that speech sort of written in New York, or was that speech written in Pretoria, still?

JEAN DUPREEZ: The original draft was in Pretoria because it was something - no, the original draft, we prepared in New York, Peter and I prepared in New York because we were there. But it was not, it was not with everyone's input. It was sent back to Pretoria for reviews. But at the end, you know, the delegation is there and you get the approval. Of course, the dynamics change from Pretoria to New York.

So you have a delegation in New York so now you have the foreign minister, the foreign minister is not going to get involved, in what gets to a speech. But at that point now you have Minty, the role to the advising role to the foreign minister, he kind of speaks for the foreign minister. So we were quite aware of that. You had the ambassador, which was the kind of second to the foreign minister, the head of the delegation. And then you had Peter, myself and Nic von Wielligh.

And so I remember sitting there in sort of the open area of the mission when we were typing the speech. And Peter was typing, I was typing and Minty was standing behind. But prior to this achievement being written - we wrote the speech, the basics, first.

MICHAL ONDERCO: By you, you mean you and Ambassador Goosen or also with Mr. Minty's input?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, we wrote the first draft. The first draft came from us. Well, actually, Peter wrote most of it [here discussion goes off record]

MICHAL ONDERCO: So coming back to the on the record discussion. Once the minister is okay with that speech, what changed for you?

JEAN DUPREEZ: First of all, and I'm sure Peter would have agreed with this, Nzo spoke, it's conference diplomacy so it matters when you speak. So sometimes it can make an impact just by the timing of your speech. We didn't want to speak on the first day, but we were still working on the speech. But also I think Minty was probably trying still to change this position. So we put our name on the second day, this was the 19th of April, I think, yeah. So it was a Tuesday morning and the conference I think started earlier than normal. It doesn't matter, we were the first speaker.

Now again, with all respect to the former foreign minister, may his soul rest in peace, he was not the most exciting speaker. He would probably talk himself to death, to fall asleep. And so we were a bit anxious in how this is going to go. Having met and read the speech, subsequent times, I thought the speech was a bit rambling. It was blah, blah - it was too long.

You know, we made these two proposals, which one was a bit wonky in the review part - it was not very solid, and of course the indefinite part. So it's kind of hidden in the speech, the indefinite part. It's not 'bang, we're going to support indefinite extension' I cannot tell you - well, I can tell you, I mean, it was this very awkward - well not awkward, a very strange feeling. Because I remember exactly where we sat. These meetings are loud. We were in the General Assembly hall.

First speaker, people are still walking around and getting their seats. People come late, you know. And suddenly now you have South Africa, Alfred Nzo, there's an older gentleman, gray beard and sort of a deep voice, but he was not a person that would sort of silence the room when he speaks. But there was silence. And what you want after your speech is some reaction to it. You want some positive reaction because

otherwise it just dies off. And so people come with set pieces.

And what is not, in all the history of the NPT, not well understood is the background, the sidebar activities going outside the room. So he made his proposals. We were, I think both Peter and I were struck about the dynamics of the room. And it's something to which people were actually listening to, to what he was saying. But I guess what had happened afterwards that's more important.

And I think one of the things that I admired about this, I'm sure you're familiar with the Acronym Institute, but this is one of my most precious documents that I've kept. And you can see that it's in very pristine condition. But Rebecca Johnson - was Rebecca at your meeting?

MICHAL ONDERCO: No.

JEAN DUPREEZ: You should have been there. Rebecca provided us with the space to move in, because she wrote daily things this way, especially once the negotiations in Dhanapala group. And so she would talk to us, and would talk to Sven, she would talk to people on the side and then she would bring out these little briefings. Of course, it was done all hush-hush. People didn't really know what to expect. But she gave a lot of - gave it a lot of oxygen, if you can say that.

The American reaction was very muted at first and that was deliberate. The Russian first dismissed it. The French also was dismissive of the Brits. The Chinese had this strange - the Chinese positions were always very strange. They had, what was it, it was an indefinite extension. Was it smooth - a smooth indefinite extension, I think it was something like that.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Smooth conference.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Smooth conference - that is so Chinese. So, the Russians were - it took a while for the P5 to come out, after a while, a day or two. But what was interesting is that soon after Nzo spoke, someone from Dhanapala's delegation came to us, to where we sat and wanted to meet. We said we wanted to meet in their meeting room behind the rostrum. And that is usual for the president of any of the conference, as it is for the Secretary General or the President of the General Assembly to meet delegations. And so we met and Abdul was part of that meeting.

And Dhanapala basically asked us if we would be willing for him to use these ideas. Well, of course, we said yes. And that's where he asked us if we couldn't do better further develop these principles, which we then did in terms of a working paper and we expanded them. And that's when a lot of emphasis went on negative security assurances in this.

And he wanted to know more, because then at that point there was already a number of ideas on the review part. So it was difficult to reach out to Mexico, to Indonesia and others because of what transpired before, but we started to think alike in terms of the process itself.

For us, I recall that it was, the two were not de-linked. They were part of one concept. Because you have to climb the ladder to get to the objective. And speaking of objectives, what was interesting, I don't know if you know this, but Indonesia in these closed consultations was hard set on using objectives. And over the years I've become very close friends with many Indonesian colleagues, and visited there dozens of times, and I've become quite fond of the Indonesian culture. And have an understanding and also in their language, that the word principles and objectives,

while for an English speaker are two different meanings, for them it's like a goal, it's an objective.

And then if you look at the language that actually came out, it was the principle, objective, and ways. If you go to the English dictionary you'll find that this doesn't really make sense. But there was a meeting of minds, there to bring objectives in. It was a part of a compromise that Dhanapala came up with too. If you want to separate in the principles and objectives document, which are the principles and which are the objectives, it's very hard to do.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But if you - before you basically went there, I heard from Ambassador Goosen that you had this meeting with Minister Nzo and Vice President Gore about the cooperation between the U.S. and South Africa. What was the sort of more palpable outcome of that meeting?

JEAN DUPREEZ: I absolutely - I don't recall.

MICHAL ONDERCO: You don't recall?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, I really don't recall. I mean, this would be in the broader context.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And that was at a time when South Africa's - remember, South Africa's position on this was not - I'm told and letter what was sent - and even that letter had some ambiguities. You have a copy of that letter, right?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yeah.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah. There's some ambiguities in that letter. This was not South Africa wholeheartedly support the indefinite extension of the NPT. It was not there. So, you know, even what Alfred Nzo said on the podium was still not - that's why we refused, we would never have signed the Canadian resolution.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But in the end you did sign it.

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, we didn't. No. We never signed that document. There were, by the 5th of May which was the cutoff, they had one or two less than 90 votes. And I think Singapore was the last one who signed on, which had succumbed to pressure. And I think at the end they had about 104 votes. We never signed. I don't think Ireland signed, New Zealand didn't sign and I think Sweden signed.

I know you wonder where the New Agenda Coalition came from. So we never signed that thing. We were quite opposed to it. But, we kept close contact with Sven [Jurschewsky] who was walking around with the bloody list because they didn't want to tell people who is on the list. This pissed people off, especially the non-aligned group. Because in the early parts of the PrepCom, there was a long discussion.

I mean, we don't really care about it, but on the voting mechanism, whether it should be open or confident - and the non-alignment is pushing hard and it should be in confidence because non-aligned countries are small and so they are susceptible to pressure. Now as we saw, you see the, it was a member of the U.S. delegation, I forgot his name now. He was very good in drawing -

MICHAL ONDERCO: Carlton Stoiber

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah. You see that series?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Now there's some excellent cartoons in there that gives you the atmospherics of that conference. I think there was this one of a Pacific Island state, where there is a call from -- so, countries were quite susceptible to this kind of pressure. So the atmospherics in that whole conference was very negative. And so coming back to your question about that particular meeting, I think this was a broader context meeting, but I honestly can't really recall what the meeting was.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So in that negotiation in Dhanapala's group, what were the main sticking points about the principles and objectives as they later became? What were the toughest negotiations about?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, I think it was more about how this would fit in with the overall objective here, the conference, indefinite extension, well had two objectives. So there was a lot of discussion on how the indefinite extension is linked to these principles. There were those in the NAM, I think we may even have pushed with them, that have argued that these two things should be equal. And eventually this was not just Dhanapala, there was a decision or a strong push that, and I think Indonesia was strongly involved, and Mexico as well, that there should be cross-references to this. So when Dhanapala came up with this sort of Dhanapala option, it made it very clear that none of these issues stand on their own, including the resolution on the Middle East. For the resolution, the Middle East was never discussed in that small room.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But that was also, no, something that you and South Africa were thinking too much about.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Not at all. We didn't want to get involved in it. I mean, it transpired in the Main Committees, as it always does. And so we were not, we didn't want to get involved in that issue at all. And even today you would find South Africa is not very much interested in that issue.

I think it is - while agreeing with the Arab main objectives, [and] absolutely disagreeing with the fact that Israel has the nuclear weapon. It has, over the years, hijacked the NPT and mean, that's what happened. I mean, Nabil Fahmy jumped up on the floor and we were just as surprised about this. And Nabil being a shrewd politician as we know, and I have a lot of respect for Nabil and I'm sorry I couldn't see him at this conference, but he knew what he was doing and he communicated that to the U.S.

So, he knew that if he played his hand too soon on this that it, you know, and so he played it in a very, very deliberate way. But to come back to the - I mean there was one of the issues because of, of course, my later year involvement in the CTBT, you recall these things, FMCT issues.

One of the big sticking points there was the CTBT. And I know Mexico was, they had really dug their heels in. And if you think back, and I always make the point, the conference that I regard of the NPT that was the most successful unsuccessful conference was 1990. Where it didn't agree on an outcome document, but mostly because Mexico and with it the non-aligned, wanted clear references CTBT and nuclear disarmament. And obviously that was not going to be given.

But three years later, it came and stood up in the general assembly and said, you know, the United States negotiated a CTBT. So you can argue that that contributed to that. So, you know, there was disagreement among the P5 about CTBT because the negotiations were taking place at the same. And the same people that were sitting there were the negotiators. And so this was very much an issue.

The issue on the fissile material treaty - I mean this is something that South Africa started it or position on that about excessive stock, you know, material that comes out of nuclear weapons. So this was all in there. The issue of safeguards was very much there. This was obviously early days of looking for the additional protocol, but the need for strengthening it.

Of course, Iraq. Dhanapala tried to take and cut these things out of these discussions to keep them in the Main Committees. But they came in. I mean the dynamics of that was really, really interesting because it was - I don't know how familiar you are with the U.N. headquarters layout, but below the Security Council chamber on that whole floor are sort of the more committee rules.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: And they range from one to nine. NPT meetings normally held in four and some of the larger meetings. But there was room nine is a tiny little room with an oval table and behind the oval it could seat about thirty-odd people. There were one row of chairs like this against the wall and there was an invitation piece. So this was for really for sort of high-level discussions amongst, you know, delegations and so on. And this is the room that he chose to have this meeting. There were many other rooms we could have taken - but there was a purpose.

MICHAL ONDERCO: To keep it small

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah. And there were no windows in this room. And this is '95 so the signs and the no smoking sign "smoking is strongly discouraged" or something like that. And Peter Goosen would sit under the sign, smoking. So you could imagine.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So in that room the South African representation was you and Peter?

JEAN DUPREEZ: It was essentially Peter. I was assigned to cover Main Committee I. Peter, because you could only have two people.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Who was the number two?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, Minty was there, but Minty also, but Minty also -- Abdul is not the person. He's not a ground worker - he's a big thinker. And so he's not the one who is going to sit and negotiate commas and periods and things like that. So he would come in and so on. And of course, there were always differences. Or, you know, because Main Committee I was not always meeting, so then I would go in and so on.

Because we were a small delegation, so we had to - Nic was covering safeguards. I don't think we really cared much about what happened in Main Committee III at the time. So what my job was in Main Committee was essentially to make sure that all the chaos, and it was absolutely chaotic, it was a bad - the Main Committee Chair, I think he was from Poland, I don't remember.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Main Committee I was from Nigeria.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah, yeah - that's right, that's right. So no, Poland was the -

MICHAL ONDERCO: The drafting.

JEAN DUPREEZ: The drafting committee. So it was in shambles. It was chaotic. So the more chaos there was in that meeting, the better for us. So you know, but I also wanted to make sure that we didn't damage what was going on in these meetings. And so what you saw, you basically had most of the senior diplomats in the small room and the more juniors playing in the dirt. But Peter and I, you know, we communicated this constantly. I had free access to the room. But he was the main negotiator in that.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So when did the negative security assurances fall out of the principles? Because that's the big thing that is sort of, if you compare the speech that Nzo gave and then the principles, there's a big overlap. But the big thing that is missing is the negative security assurances.

JEAN DUPREEZ: But they are in the Principles and Objectives.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But they're not as prominent as they were.

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, no, absolutely, no, no. I would admit. And subsequent to that in 2000 and others they also enacted. I'm sure - and had it not been for South Africa, they would have just disappeared. There was absolutely no support from the P5 for it. And one of the interesting things there, and here my recollection is a bit vague, there was an assurance issued. And this was the same year.

The Security Council issued a positive security assurance. But then there were separate negative security assurances issued by the P5. The United States' one was quite profound and quite clear and this is kind of what we wanted. But subsequent to that, I've learned that this was all done in the context of the indefinite extension. And that there were actually decisions at this sort of high command, nuclear command, that were recorded discussions, and that was their own decision. So they were never serious about this.

MICHAL ONDERCO: About what?

JEAN DUPREEZ: About this issuing of this negative security assurance, which is subsequently, be overturned several times by each and every president that went over in a different way. Obama tried to go back to the original one. And today you just look in a strange way to the United States, then you'll be targeted by nuclear weapons. So, negative security assurance was always a very, very difficult issue. And so, I think that was part of the compromise diplomacy. In the non-aligned, interestingly enough, we didn't have a lot of traction on that. Again, the non-aligned is a strange beast.

So, for years afterwards we had difficulties within NAM because the NAM pushed a resolution in the first committee, wanted to make negative security assurances a subject for discussion at the CD. And we opposed it, not strongly, we abstained. For the simple reason is that negative security assurances could only be viewed in the context of the NPT.

So, the reality of it? If you asked me to tell you looking back? Are you going to just keep ignoring India and Pakistan? I mean there was a time when actually India or Pakistan, India said they will issue the negative security assurances - they will. So, there was a split in the NAM on that issue.

So I can - I really, this is, my memory is a bit vague on this. But I know that it was - and our position on negative security assurances, over time there was this - got support. Even in the New Agenda [Coalition] there was not that much support for it.

MICHAL ONDERCO: I want to ask still two more questions. One is, how did you see the dynamic within P5? Did you feel that they were always on the same page?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No. But the dynamic of the P5 then and the dynamic today is a vastly different thing. In those days, while a sort of an informal guardian of the treaty, the P5 kind of set the pace. So when the P5 would agree on something or the P5 made a statement, and this was very prominent in 2000, that gave you a kind of idea of what the boundaries are, where you can play. Today it's all over the place.

So, was there cohesion? I think there was far more respect for positions. I think the Russians and the U.S. cooperated far more. There was close relationships between people like Berdenikov and Graham and so on. The Chinese....I don't know if you know the Chinese - you should have been at your meeting then you would have had a very interesting meeting.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Ambassador Sha?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yeah.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, Ambassador Cha is member of the People's Assembly or whatever however it's called in China. And they're now in the session. So he couldn't --

JEAN DUPREEZ: Again, one of these characters.

MICHAL ONDERCO: We did a long oral history interview with him.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Ambassador Sha is one of my favorite guys, he's really a nice guy, but he doesn't mince words. But if you think about the people that you have there, and you had - what was the French ambassador?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Errera

JEAN DUPREEZ: Sorry for you, poor guy. And then you had Michael Weston. So there was sort of a personal relationship between them. And I mean, there were several meetings we know before and during and after the conference. Because obviously it's not coordinating, but one of the successes as a result of the P5 dynamics, again, in the principles was on the CTBT. Because the French and the Chinese wanted to keep the door open, hence the fact that the Chinese tested a few days after the conference, the French a few months.

But they actually resolved some of the issues that fed into the CD negotiations in New York. You know, I would argue that the P5 gave up on action plan on nuclear disarmament. They didn't stick to it later, but formed the basis of the 2000 conference. And again, the French and the Russians were probably, but the French in particular, were not very pleased with that. But given the P5 dynamics. So you read the Action Plan and the Principles and Objectives document, the Progressive Efforts part, the CTBT part [unintelligible]. So those are things that, I think there's dynamics successfully pushed.

MICHAL ONDERCO: And one thing that I was also curious about is, at that time South

Africans or around the NPT RevCon, I think you referenced South Africans were also involved in negotiations that later led to the [completion of the Pelindaba Treaty and the establishment of nuclear weapons free zone in Africa. How did that influence your view of the desirability of indefinite extension? Or did it have, in any way, impact on what you felt about the NPT?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Oh, absolutely. No, definitely. That's why, the negotiations. Again, I was there for the final round of negotiations that took place in Johannesburg. Peter attended, I think, in addition to that, two others; some of them started earlier before South Africa was a democratic country. But I don't know, I think I went to Addis Abba too.

But anyway, so I think it, first of all, helped us understand the dynamics. The fact that South Africa pushed hard at the Review Conference for the need for the nuclear weapon free zones had to do, first and foremost, with the Pelindaba Treaty. That served in some ways as a uniting factor for African states.

I mean, African politics are very interesting. Again, we were the pariah, coming out of this pariah status. So I remember sitting in Main Committee I at one point and an African delegate raised the flag and said - well, how sure are we that South Africa actually gave up its nuclear weapons? I said don't ask me; ask the IAEA. But that was the kind of atmospherics. So Nelson Mandela was beloved by everyone, but African countries are sovereign nations, and Nelson and I have this full on pariah that is held up as the savior here.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Would Pelindaba be possible if you didn't go for indefinite extension?

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, I think it would have been, it would have actually been - in fact -

MICHAL ONDERCO: It would or it wouldn't?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Yes, it would. I don't see the link between the two. That's my - I don't know, I guess I had a different view. What was Minty's view?

MICHAL ONDERCO: Well, he said it wouldn't be possible.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Minty is on record as having stated in a meeting in Geneva to say nuclear weapon free zones are about disarming the disarmed and therefore, they are irrelevant - quote, unquote - you can go to the record.

So to say that the - if the treaty was extended in some other way, that the Pelindaba treaty would not be concluded, I don't think so. In fact, it would have made Pelindaba treaty even more important. So I take issue with that. He may have said it in the context, I don't know. The Pelindaba treaty - again, Peter was the lead negotiator then. I don't know what he said to you about it.

MICHAL ONDERCO: We didn't talk about Pelindaba. There was no time to talk about Pelindaba.

JEAN DUPREEZ: I think he has become a bit skeptical. I mean, I worked very hard while I was here to get it enforced. And it still has, I don't know what the numbers are, 36 odd countries who are members of it. And it's really not - and this is the thing with African nations - South Africa was, for a variety of reasons, the impetus for African politics in the nuclear field because it was focused on -- apartheid, nuclear weapons.

This is what made Abdul Minty, gave him a platform.

And this was called the frontline states made by Robert Mugabe, later became leader of SADC. And their guiding principle was this issue. Now you can take this issue away, you take the bully pulpit away, what is it? I remember talking to African in New York, in this meeting, talking to African diplomats and even having a meeting with senior African, sitting in with foreign ministers that were there and bilaterals and so on. Where they said you guys gave up the African bomb; you should never have done that.

We sat there like whoa, what is this? Are you jealous? No, you can think, you can put it into context. Africa has always been sort of sidelined, abused. Africa doesn't have a say, doesn't have the expertise. Some of them do and gave it up. But at the same time the Pelindaba Treaty, because it was in it a small room, generated interest among African, the participating negotiators. And that itself established pride and ownership of the issue.

So many of the negotiators that participated in the Pelindaba Treaty negotiations also participated in this. And so there was awareness at the time. Of course, you reminded me, Ayewah was the chair of Main Committee I, and Nigeria was one of the key driving forces behind the Pelindaba Treaty. So again, I find that argument weird.

MICHAL ONDERCO: So when the treaty was extended and the principles and objectives here were adopted, what were your expectations at the time for the future?

JEAN DUPREEZ: The ink did not even dry on the document, as they say, when the French first came out and said that their interpretation of the documents are different than the rest. And of course, then they tested a nuclear device. So I remember Peter and I going down to Cape Town, going and brief the foreign relations committee or something.

And again, everyone, the African newspapers and everyone was, very complimentary of the role of South Africa in this and so on. And so on a personal basis, I think you felt a little bit euphoric and said well, you know, we have accomplished something. And you know, where did that lead us? I think it made South Africa, we knew at that time, but a force to be reckoned with. And that felt good. First of all, you had the Nelson Mandela factor and now you had this.

So yeah, the expectations were, I think, were pretty high. And that's what you saw as a result of that. Because it was interesting, the same countries that kind of operated, we didn't really coordinate. We had good consultations with New Zealand, what was his name? He might have passed away, hell of a nice guy, Clive Pearson, Clive Pearson. And so the concept, Clive Pearson, McPharon Barr [phonetic], I and Peter Goosen, the concept for a New Agenda [Coalition] was born in '95 at that conference, '98 we issued [it].

So I was sent to New York in '98 by Abdul Minty to go and work with the non-aligned and to promote the New Agenda for review. And so from the end of '95, the expectations were that we are going to be working with cross-sectional people and countries to build on what was achieved. And I think from that perspective, it was successful and we had high expectations. Twenty odd years later, we have become quite jaded.

MICHAL ONDERCO: But were you, at the time, expecting that there may be, for example, a realistic progress on nuclear disarmament?

JEAN DUPREEZ: I think so. I think so, and I don't think it was an unrealistic expectation.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: I mean, I've said it in lectures since then. The '90s was this sort of can-do, there was a can-do feeling if you think about what was accomplished from South Africa, late '89, but early 1990s right through. There was a few hiccups in our field. There was the India Pakistan test. But of course, even the Chinese and the French test, but you know, you could even argue that that enabled them to sign the CTBT, though China is still not ratified. Then, of course, there was a Senate vote in '99 against the CTBT. These are little hiccups. But overall, a lot of things were accomplished in this field.

You had the NPT Conference, the 2000 Review Conference, the Land Mine Treaty, the Pelindaba Treaty. You know, you have several START negotiations. I mean, there was a lot of progress. And so I think the expectations that things can be on nuclear disarmament were high. And that's why we went into the 2000 Review Conference as a force; not just as a country, but as a group.

And you know, one thing, and I will say - again, you can quote me, the 2000 Review Conference was first of all a litmus test of the success of the decision to indefinitely extend the treaty. There's no denial about it. If the 2000 Review Conference failed in producing a final document, it would have given further fuel to the argument by Abdul Minty and a majority of countries that the decision in '95 was wrong.

2000 was a success because the nuclear weapons states, and particularly in the United States, wanted it to work. This was at a time when, the Clinton administration had his back against the wall for a variety of reasons, particularly the president himself. But there were people there that wanted to make it work.

And so something that's often said by historians is that the 2000 conference was a success because of the New Agenda. Partly, but it was a success, what people don't realize, is that it was the United States that came to us and said we need to talk, we need to have these discussions.

The conference president had the foresight of finding us a room and putting a big sign out there - "private consultations." And the compromises that we were able to get from the U.S. and the other P5 was because we were riding on what happened in '95. And so from that perspective, you can argue that the '95 decision was, in fact, the right one. Because it provided not just South Africa, but the New Agenda countries, which maybe not in a group in '95, but to a large extent actually collaborate - I didn't even think that they collaborated, but they did. And that's how we chose them.

There were a few others that we wanted onboard there that didn't want to come onboard, Canada being one, Norway was another one. So The Netherlands was one. Gosh, days and nights with The Netherlands - pleaded for them to join. But that all came out of the '95 success. Again, you can look back and you can shoot it down, as I have.

MICHAL ONDERCO: I have run out of my questions and I always ask at the end, is there something that I should have asked about and I didn't? Is there something big and important that I have missed to ask?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Well, I just alluded to it.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Sorry?

JEAN DUPREEZ: I just alluded to it in my last comment; did we take the right decision?

MICHAL ONDERCO: So you think that with the benefit of hindsight, you think that was not the best decision?

JEAN DUPREEZ: Again, I would preface it first by saying that the decision was taken, like all of these decisions, are taken in the context of a specific time.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Yes.

JEAN DUPREEZ: So in the context of that specific time with the knowledge that we had, which may or may not have been the best knowledge. But also in the context of the guidance that we received, the political situation, both in South Africa, but also in our relationship with other countries. It was the best of the decisions, the better one. With the convenience of hindsight, the luxury of hindsight, rather, I would say it was the wrong decision. For the simple reason, and you know, here Abdul and I agree.

We gave away the leverage that was built into the treaty, the legal leverage that was built into the treaty. That was it. It was not designed to be the leverage that the non-aligned wanted because there's no time down frame for nuclear disarmament and so on. That leverage they lost when they negotiated the treaty. But it was built in there. Now legally, the question then comes up how would you do that? So the only way that that could have been done is with a rollover, the original South African idea.

MICHAL ONDERCO: The green light mechanism.

JEAN DUPREEZ: The green light mechanism. And that would have been, after 25 years, you decide to continue with the Treaty. Our legal opinion and the legal opinion of the Americans and others were different because they argued that there is no basis for another review conference in the treaty, which is true. But treaties, every review conference interpret the treaty.

So I'm not a lawyer, but in my experience, you can make a political decision that interprets the legal provisions of a treaty and how it's implemented. But if you then play this out, as we did in that one presentation we made to Thabo Mbeki, we said what would that impact of that be?

Now it is 18 months away from 2020. If we had taken that decision, what would the consequences today be, and what would we decide? I think I can emphatically state that they would, after mid-May of 2020, the NPT would be no more because there would have been no agreement at that conference. I think for many countries that would be a good thing. People would say, the NPT serves no longer a purpose.

I don't agree with it. I am not no longer a big NPT supporter. I think it has failed in its objectives. Has it maintained the status quo in a certain way? Yes. I told you, we came to the conclusion that two countries, in the run-up to '95, two countries were outliers. Not the countries that were near to sign, like the India, Pakistan, but Iraq and North Korea.

Well, we all know what's going on. North Korea is still out there. But we also know that Brazil and Argentina and a number of other countries joined, right? So if you measure the success based on that, then the NPT has been okay. Does the NPT do well in nuclear disarmament? No, but it's not a nuclear disarmament treaty. It was

never designed. You get Tom Graham and may his soul rest in peace, poor George Bunn I mean, what a nice guy. That guy taught me so much about this treaty. So George Bunn used to say, I mean, there are three articles in the treaty, Article I, II, III. The rest were hangers-on.

MICHAL ONDERCO: I see a strange similarity between what Ronald Timerbaev told me in the interview and what you are.

JEAN DUPREEZ: You know, the job that I had here at CNS, even though the guy who held that job before me was Tariq Rauf

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: Who held before Tariq was Ronald Timerbaev.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Okay.

JEAN DUPREEZ: No, I mean, there's the other, there's that. So we would actually be looking at the downfall of the NPT. Realistically, what would have transpired had South Africa had not put forward these ideas, there would have been a vote. The vote would have been in favor of indefinite extension. There would not have been any need to have any other documents; that would have been it.

The moment that went over, they could have just said we're going to go for a vote. The timing of it was important, hence the fact that many countries didn't sign it because it allowed Dhanapala to conclude his negotiations. So that was already wrapped up. So they finally got this vote.

As they put it to a vote, I would say maybe 114 or so countries, 120 if they pushed a little bit harder. There were 170, 180 countries at the NPT at that point. So countries like South Africa, most of them are aligned, would have said that we probably would have abstained because that would have been the right thing to do, but some others would have voted against. They would have said "the vote does not apply to us:.

And so in its subsequent things in the NPT would have been viewed against that context. So you would have actually had a more damaged NPT as a result of that, but then you would have where we are now. So again, if you look at it, there were these three options. We lost the leverage.

If we maintained the leverage, we would have been faced today with the situation that the NPT was going to die. And you know, in the bigger context, if you talk to people that are on the forefront of the nuclear ban treaty, they probably would tell you well, so be it because there's another show in town and that might be the case.

Will the NPT ever die? No, because - it could become irrelevant over time. But at this point, I think as a sort of a long-time NPT apparatchick, that NPT offers the forum for dialogue amongst countries to do other things. What is written in these documents at the end doesn't matter.

MICHAL ONDERCO: Thank you very much for your time and thank you very much for sharing your wisdom.

JEAN DUPREEZ: There's not a lot of wisdom in there. You actually shared with me things that I had forgotten about completely.