The 13th meeting of the CSCAP Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, Feb. 21-22, 2011. Over 60 experts, government officials, and Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders from over 20 countries and international organizations attended (all in their private capacities). To provide input to and create synergy with the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Nonproliferation and Disarmament that immediately followed, we focused on disarmament issues.

During his introductory remarks, Study Group co-chair Ralph Cossa noted that as part of the Pacific Forum’s Young Leaders program, a subset of Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fellows was being established to promote expertise among the next generation of scholars, security specialists, and officials. Details about the Young Leaders program are on the Forum’s web site [www.pacforum.org] and participants were encouraged to help identify next generation specialists who would benefit from involvement in this program.

Our first session addressed recent developments in the global nonproliferation regime (GNR). Manpreet Sethi (CSCAP India) offered views on the status of the commitments made at the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference (RevCon) and implementation of the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) action plan. She argued that the RevCon commitments were credible and offer hope for future progress. While the 64 recommendations are not as ambitious that they could have been, they were nearly evenly balanced between nonproliferation and disarmament. This reinforces the idea that these two pillars are intrinsically linked and progress in one will not be possible without progress in the other – an important step in reconciling the underlying disagreement between nuclear weapon states (NWS) and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS).

Sethi also viewed progress on implementation of the NSS action plan as a step in the right direction, highlighting India’s actions as indicative of the general recognition of the importance of nuclear security among countries. Actions cited include support for a larger role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in nuclear security; support for improving international legal instruments to ensure nuclear security, such as the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)1540, and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism; and national efforts to control nuclear materials through improved strategic trade management and compliance with export control regimes such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group, and the Missile Control and Technology Regime (MTCR). Sethi concluded by emphasizing that success with nuclear security requires 100 percent support from all countries because we are all vulnerable to the weakest link in the chain.

Kim Young-ho (CSCAP Korea) then offered a preview of what we can anticipate at the 2012 NSS, which will be held in Seoul. He began by pointing out that while the first NSS raised awareness of
the threat of nuclear terrorism and the need for better controls of fissile materials, the lack of legally binding agreements remains a weakness. He noted that much of the agenda for the 2012 NSS would be based on the November 2010 Sherpas Meeting held in Argentina where delegates recommended putting the following issues on the agenda to promote nuclear security:

- establish counter-smuggling teams;
- cooperate in investigations and the use of nuclear forensics to combat illegal transfer of nuclear materials;
- establish guidelines to minimize the use of highly enriched uranium (HEU);
- reduce personal access to nuclear processing facilities – a “hands off” approach;
- develop programs to promote a nuclear security culture among personnel operating civilian nuclear facilities;
- strengthen physical protection of nuclear material and facilities;
- confirm and continue to urge the elimination of surplus fissile materials; and
- tighten control over transport of nuclear materials.

Seoul sees the summit as a chance to demonstrate that it is a state with advanced technology for commercial use of nuclear energy with the ability to export nuclear plants and that it has an exemplary record observing international norms and rules in its use of nuclear energy. In addition, Seoul intends to emphasize implementation of the pledges made at the first NSS and the submission of national reports. To add a South Korean flavor to the second summit, Seoul hopes to use indigenous information technologies to establish databases on nuclear materials and their transactions. Several issues and concerns have yet to be addressed. For example, should the scope be widened to include radioactive materials and nuclear technologies rather than just fissile materials? There is also a question whether the process should be institutionalized by calling for a third NSS, or be expanded by inviting other states such as North Korea, or by having side events for commercial interests and the academic community.

In his presentation, Victor Mizin (CSCAP Russia) argued that the NPT was strengthened following ratification of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). While acknowledging that the commitments made at the NPT RevCon are a step forward, the NPT is no panacea. People remain locked in the mindset of mutually assured destruction (MAD), there is a great deal of skepticism about the US commitment to reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, and there is ongoing concern that other NWS are reluctant to join the arms control process. Since the NPT was formulated during the Cold War and separates states into NWS and NNWS, many countries view the treaty as a tool of the NWS to deny them access to nuclear technology. Thus for some states, the pursuit of nuclear weapons is a sign of development while others see any attempt by a NNWS to develop nuclear technology as a threat to the integrity of the treaty. India serves as an obvious example, even if it never signed the NPT.

In the current circumstances – where the most immediate threat is the effective control of nuclear materials and technology – other supporting regimes such as the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540, supplementary controls and regimes, and integrated safeguards are important tools to augment the NPT. Since many states have established effective legal frameworks for preventing proliferation based on the provisions of the NPT, it is better to augment than to attempt to renegotiate the treaty itself.
During the discussion, there was general agreement that the 2010 NPT RevCon made clear that disarmament and nonproliferation are intrinsically related and that progress on one is difficult or impossible without progress on the other. However, some participants expressed skepticism about the prospects for reducing the risk of nonproliferation given the lack of action on the 64 recommendations outlined at the RevCon. The inability to agree on a specific timeline for disarmament and the failure to include specific actions for reducing the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrine at the RevCon is not encouraging. Coupled with the lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament, one participant concluded that the NNWS would become increasingly disenchanted with the NWS promise of movement toward general disarmament. For some, the disenchantment extends to the NPT itself, while others argued that a world with the NPT, while not ideal, was still better than one without it.

Others reaffirmed the importance of the NSS and emphasized the need to address the immediate concern of controlling nuclear materials. They agreed with Mizin that it was important to find supplementary mechanisms to augment the NPT: this is a present danger that cannot await resolution of the tension between disarmament and nonproliferation advocates. One participant acknowledged that porous borders left his country vulnerable and made it a weak link in the nonproliferation chain. Others pointed out that little action has been taken to institutionalize the NSS. While the action plan was a good first step, little has been done to implement it and there aren’t any enduring guiding principles or clear objectives. In their absence, it will be difficult to sustain momentum in the drive for nuclear security. This is a real challenge for the 2012 summit.

Responding to charges that the US was not serious about disarmament, a US participant argued that the trend lines were positive, highlighting a reiteration of the commitment to eliminate its chemical agent arsenal, continued engagement in bilateral disarmament talks, narrowed parameters for use of nuclear weapons, and less reliance on nuclear weapons in its planning documents. He concluded, however, that it would be politically impossible for the US to pursue more aggressive disarmament steps in the face of continued proliferation.

Russia gets psychological reassurance by maintaining its nuclear arsenal, given a relatively slow pace in developing conventional alternatives. NATO remains a concern and is viewed by many Russians as being sufficient to justify maintenance of tactical nuclear capabilities. The possibility of the weaponization of space and the US pursuit of prompt conventional global strike capability makes it difficult for some in Russia to envision taking the next step in reducing reliance on nuclear weapons.

Session 2 addressed alternative approaches to promote Korean denuclearization. Yang Yi (CSCAP China) argued that the Six-Party Talks remain the best forum for addressing this problem. While all parties involved accept the importance of maintaining a dialogue, each party has different demands and has different expectations for the talks; not surprisingly, progress has been difficult. With the significant increase in tensions between North and South Korea following the Cheonan incident and the shelling at Yeongpyong Island, China proposed emergency consultations among the heads of delegation to the Six-Party Talks “to ease the tensions on the Korean Peninsula and provide a platform of engagement and dialogue.” Since this proposal was rejected by other parties, China has been working with North Korea, South Korea, and the US to prevent further escalation.
reach consensus on the importance of maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula, and promote economic development while maintaining hope that the talks will resume.

Scott Snyder (USCSCAP) offered alternative approaches that might foster progress given the current stalemate in the talks. For him, alternative approaches may be necessary because the latest revelations by North Korea about its advanced uranium enrichment program significantly changed the negotiations dynamic. It is difficult to imagine a viable process by which North Korea would move toward denuclearization – this is a significant obstacle to the resumption of the Six-Party Talks. For the US, the revelation of the uranium enrichment program has undermined a fundamental premise that undergirded its willingness to negotiate with the North: its ability to independently verify the North’s compliance with any agreement. In the absence of this basic tenet, it is very difficult to return to the Six-Party Talks. But the US can’t abandon prospects for an eventual return to the talks because they do represent an important commitment by North Korea to abandon its nuclear program. By abandoning the Six-Party Talks, the US would implicitly acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear weapon state. The US cannot pursue or accept normalization of relations with a nuclear North Korea.

Nevertheless, maintaining regional stability and reducing tension remain important priorities. The other parties should be talking about crisis management mechanisms, reducing tensions, building confidence, and promoting regional cooperation in alternative venues and in various combinations of parties in the Six-Party Talks. In fact, given the fragility of the leadership succession process in North Korea and the threat this could pose to regional stability, there should be more consultations among countries in the region.

Snyder made specific recommendations for improving regional coordination on crisis management, strengthening mechanisms for managing conventional provocations, addressing the growing missile threat from North Korea, promoting integration of North Korea into the region, and catalyzing transformation within North Korea. Some hope that working on these issues could lead North Korea to return to the path of denuclearization, help stabilize the inter-Korean relationship, and promote development of a direct US-North Korea dialogue mechanism. These conditions are needed before the Six-Party Talks can resume.

The discussion began with one participant suggesting that denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was no longer possible without regime change in the North. A US participant noted his disappointment that neither presentation included a reference to the failure of the UN resolutions to have any influence on North Korea’s behavior. He blamed China for not using the resolutions to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear program; instead Beijing accepted and enabled North Korea in its defiance of UN resolutions. This has damaged the credibility of the UN Security Council and called into question China’s ability to be an “honest broker” in the Six-Party Talks. Therefore, it is necessary to find a way to restore UN credibility and perhaps convene talks among the other five parties (excluding North Korea) to evaluate next steps. Some participants questioned the value of the Six-Party Talks as a mechanism for resolving the denuclearization problem even though several participants pointed out that the September 2005 agreement is an important commitment by North Korea to eliminate its nuclear programs. There was also concern that a lack of progress would lead to the “creeping legitimacy” of the North’s nuclear weapons program.
Alternatives to the Six-Party Talks were also suggested. One alternate forum would be the ASEAN Treaty on Amity and Cooperation (TAC) High Council, which was established for just such purposes. (It should be noted that the TAC High Council has never convened.) Several participants argued that the best approach for resolving the nuclear issue was bilateral talks between the US and North Korea. A US participant responded by arguing that while the US was open to bilateral engagement, it could not proceed without an acknowledgement by North Korea of its recent military provocations, its commitment to refrain from future provocations, and a commitment to return to the path of denuclearization. Another participant suggested that, given the potential for instability in North Korea, the most important task was to engage Pyongyang and seek to prevent further escalation of tensions.

A common conclusion was that as long as there was such a high level of mistrust among the six parties, progress on any of the underlying issues on the peninsula seems unlikely. However, as Snyder noted in his concluding comments, that scenario fits North Korea’s vision of becoming a “nuclear state” with relations with the US. Therefore, it is necessary for individual states to disabuse Pyongyang of this notion in order to help move the process forward. For some, that means working to create trust and seeking ways to improve relations among the parties. For others, that means working together to convince North Korea that maintaining nuclear weapons and military provocations are incompatible with the goal of creating a strong and prosperous nation.

In session 3, the group took up the issue of “next steps” in arms control following the ratification of the New START by the US and Russia. In his presentation, David Santoro (International Institute for Strategic Studies/Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leader) noted that New START provides a verification and transparency framework for US-Russia arms reductions, a foundation for subsequent negotiations on further reductions, and a basis for broader US-Russia relations and further security cooperation. Despite these positive aspects, there has not been the hoped-for progress on the promise of Obama’s Prague speech. There has been little movement on ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the development of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) continues to flounder in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). While expressing skepticism about any real progress on addressing tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, Santoro felt the best opportunity for cooperation was through the UNSCR 1540 Committee and through the NSS. The underlying issue is that is necessary to dispel the belief that disarmament is not important. Nonproliferation and disarmament are connected and NWS and NNWS have a stake in moving both processes forward.

Lyndon Burford (CSCAP New Zealand) argued that in the interest of promoting disarmament, all states, including NNWS have a role in promoting arms control. Historically, NNWS have sought to create the political climate necessary to realize disarmament. But, creating that climate requires practical steps such as promoting effective verification regimes to create trust and promoting arguments for reducing reliance on nuclear weapons in security strategies and military doctrines. Here, disarmament advocates can promote their goals through arms control.

Rajesh Basrur (CSCAP Singapore) argued that one of the weaknesses of the arms control approach to disarmament is a general lack of doctrine beyond MAD, which assumes significant numbers of weapons. As a result, as states approach zero nuclear weapons, there is a reluctance to continue reducing arsenals. He argued that the minimal deterrence strategy promoted in South Asia and
China offers lessons. Since all states have a stated no-first-use policy, arsenals are not assembled, and are not on alert, they do not pose an immediate threat, and the balance of force is not critical to the deterrence value of the weapon. While acknowledging that there are elements of the MAD doctrine that influence individual states in the region, Basrur’s central argument was that, in principle, shifting from MAD to minimal deterrence could serve as a roadmap as the large NWS reduce the size of their arsenals.

The moderator began the discussion by pointing out that it is important to distinguish between arms control and disarmament. While arms control focuses on creating so-called strategic stability, disarmament could be a source of instability. That is the basis for the argument that other NWS must join the US and Russia in the arms control process at an early stage and do more than posture. Our discussion also highlighted the need to take regional relations into consideration, or the discussion becomes sterile. Allies of the US worry about reductions that could jeopardize the ability of the US to offer its extended deterrence. There is a linkage between arms control initiatives and the development of conventional capabilities, outer space weapons, and infrastructure. Another participant argued that it might be necessary to leapfrog from arms control, which was designed to create stability in a gradual manner, to more dramatic steps to attain the goal of complete disarmament. Other key ideas included the critical role of transparency in promoting trust to move the arms control process forward and the importance of opening a dialogue among all states to promote a shift from reliance on nuclear weapons and MAD as the basis for the international security architecture. While there are encouraging signs such as the New START, dialogue among the five NWS on nuclear transparency, increased emphasis on cooperation in the US Nuclear Posture Review, and hints of progress on ratification of the CTBT, there remains a great deal of skepticism.

Session 4 focused on alternatives to arms control as a means to achieving complete nuclear disarmament. Jeffrey Lewis (James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies) began by arguing that the world is realigning nuclear forces and doctrines to a new reality in which there is a reduced significance for nuclear arsenals: credit the end of the Cold War and the realization that the very existence of nuclear weapons represents a distinct danger for this development. Therefore, while in the 1950s nuclear weapons were seen as “just another weapon,” today the acquisition of nuclear weapons is viewed as undesirable by most countries. For the US, this has meant balancing the need to maintain its commitments for extended deterrence, while developing new strategies and doctrines to substitute conventional capabilities. This has made it difficult for the US to embrace minimal deterrence and a declaratory no-first-use policy. Practical steps needed include more consultation on the role of nuclear weapons in the current security architecture and better coordination on missile defense. Given the shifting reality, disarmament is not just a bargain to ensure nonproliferation goals are achieved; it is something we must all do.

Li Hong (CSCAP China) offered an explanation of China’s minimal deterrence doctrine. He argued that the doctrine is premised on no-first-use and the key is to maintain a dynamic retaliatory capability that is sufficient to deter the enemy based on current threat perceptions. To ensure the survivability (effectiveness) of the nuclear strategic force, it is necessary to ensure that retaliation is unacceptable to a potential opponent, that there are procedures for safe and stable operations, that the system is capable of surviving a first strike, and that you are able to identify an aggressor and have an effective command and control system to launch a counter-attack. Because the strategy is
predicated on no-first-use, moral concerns surrounding target selection and the decision itself to respond are much diminished. Li concluded by asserting that given this doctrinal approach, China would never engage in a nuclear arms race and has consistently sought complete prohibition of nuclear weapons. The academic community in China is actively producing proposals for the development of a multilateral nuclear disarmament framework.

Manpreet Sethi (CSCAP India) argued that the best means of discarding nuclear weapons is to devalue them. The current situation is one where no one actually talks about zero and it seems no one wants to get rid of nuclear weapons. The risk of nuclear terrorism is high and proliferation seems inevitable. Piecemeal solutions such as arms control, treaties to prevent further development, and removing weapons from alert without complete dismantlement only rationalize such arsenals. This engenders distrust of the real motives of the NWS and makes the nonproliferation regime unsustainable. Therefore, it is necessary to change the mindset: this begins with the notion that nuclear deterrence has kept the peace since the end of World War II, requires rethinking nuclear doctrines, investing confidence in multilateral initiatives, and relearning the relationship between peace and security. It is also necessary to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons by developing comprehensive security assurances, establishing a universal no-first-use policy, and banning the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. Perhaps the biggest challenge is to create political will. This will likely have to come from a variety of sources including a nuclear disaster, pressure from public opinion, a shift in military thinking regarding the utility of nuclear weapons, faith in verification technologies, and statesmanship. Clearly, this process cannot be open-ended. The pillars of nonproliferation and peaceful nuclear energy depend on the success of nuclear disarmament.

During the discussion there was again general recognition that disarmament remains an aspirational goal and that practical steps are required to move toward that goal. One participant recommended that the problem be broken into discrete elements that all had to be addressed to realize progress. The list included issues such as the bilateral US-Russia relationship, regional arms control (e.g., in South Asia), doctrinal adjustments, denuclearization of North Korea, NATO’s raison d’etre, improving transparency, establishing stockpile baselines, stockpile reductions, verification of warhead elimination, extended deterrence, missile defense, and strengthening the nonproliferation regime. Discussion also focused on how responsibility should be shared. While several participants felt that the US should take the lead for a variety of reasons, others argued that there had to be balance and consistency by all countries if we are going to move the disarmament process forward.

In Session 5, the group turned to the Biological Warfare Convention (BWC) and its role in addressing biosecurity threats. Masamichi Minehata (Pacific Forum CSIS Sasakawa Peace Foundation Fellow) offered views on the significance of the 7th BWC Review Conference, which will be held in late 2011. While the BWC RevCon will consider important administrative issues such as continuation of the Implementation Support Unit and annual meetings, important sensitive issues include verification, the lack of participation by life scientists in implementing the convention, the threat of bioterrorism, engagement of regional organizations, and development of an action plan on national implementation.

The major challenge, however, will be figuring out how to ensure compliance with the BWC without verification, which has proven to be a major stumbling block and the specific subject of Angela Woodward’s (New Zealand CSCAP) presentation. She argued that verification is important,
but it must rely on confidence building measures because the nature of biological research is too complex to create an effective verification system. The emergent alternative has been development of national legislation coupled with the creation of a compliance assurance framework that allows for a great deal of creativity to build confidence that a particular laboratory is in compliance with the BWC. The conceptual challenges that have emerged are: defining compliance, determining which articles of the convention apply, identifying what measures are required, examining to what extent compliance is governed by national implementation, and figuring out how to establish benchmarks given the wide variance in stages of laboratory development. The framework aims to demonstrate compliance while detecting and deterring noncompliance. Woodward felt that successful implementation will require improved confidence building measures, a UNSC investigative mechanism to evaluate noncompliance, utilization of the inter-sessional process to evaluate national implementation, and development of a legally binding protocol. Three important roles for regional organizations and civil society in this process include support for national implementation and compliance measures, development of ideas for compliance assurance and assessment, and capacity development for improving verification.

Piers Millett (BWC ISU) offered his views on how the BWC promotes global health security. While noting that several countries in the Asia-Pacific region have not yet signed the BWC, in many cases this seems to be due either to a lack of interest or limited bureaucratic capacity to meet the requirements of the convention. There is a threat of biological weapons, but given the diffuse nature of biological research and the frequent inability to distinguish dual-use materials, a tailored response is needed to implement the convention. States have linked an array of tools to deal with a linked array of problems. These include natural disease, unintended consequences, accidents, negligence, vandalism, and sabotage along with deliberate use of biological weapons. Since the traditional approach of identifying a threat, establishing a treaty, and organizing to operationalize the treaty doesn’t work, the BWC brings actors together and works outside the confines of the convention to address issues. The tools used include: dedicated response, international response, global coverage, leverage power of states, etc. There is mutual reinforcement in the process as cooperation reduces risks and reducing risks encourages cooperation. Some of the practical actions taken include working with animal disease, seeking to eradicate disease, engaging UN agencies in their operations and engaging the biosafety community. Millett concluded by noting that the Asia-Pacific biosafety network has made significant contributions to this process.

Our discussion highlighted the lack of awareness of the biosecurity threat and the need to do a better job of engaging in a dialogue between the policy community and the biological research community. One participant suggested that the real issue is “intentionality” since the threat extended beyond the purposeful development of weapons to a whole range of missteps and unintended consequences. That assessment confirms the need for a tailored approach and measures to prevent third party access to materials. Another participant pointed to the need to distinguish between risk and threat. In conclusion it was noted that the explosion of biotech investment in the Asia-Pacific in recent years created the need for oversight of the scientific community. Engaging in best practices discussions is critical. As a starting point, a list of experts would be helpful. While verification is desirable, it is not practical. There is the danger that all organizations want to be engaged in monitoring activity and coordinating without implementing.
Session 6 focused on the role regional organizations in the Asia-Pacific can play in promoting WMD nonproliferation and disarmament. Noor Fatriah Bakri (CSCAP Malaysia) described recent Malaysian efforts in promoting regional nonproliferation by passage of the Malaysian Strategic Trade Act (STA), which entered into operation in January 2011. Full implementation and enforcement of provisions will occur in July 2011. The legislation was passed to ensure that Malaysia has a legal mechanism to address crimes related to WMD proliferation, is in compliance with treaty obligations and the provisions of UNSCR 1540, and to prevent Malaysia from becoming a transshipment hub for illicit materials. In this sense, the STA is viewed as trade-enhancing. In an effort to harmonize its national responses and safeguard measures, Malaysia has worked closely with its neighbors, Singapore and the Philippines.

Togzhan Kassenova (University of Georgia) next offered views on how multilateral organizations in the Asia Pacific are addressing WMD-related issues. She began by arguing that the WMD proliferation risk in the region had become more complicated since the end of the Cold War, when the major concern was military conflict. Now, the region has a rising number of nuclear energy programs, the establishment of dual use industries, and a rapid increase in trade of strategic materials. In this more complex environment, which is heavily focused on trade and commerce, a military response would be inappropriate. But efforts to address proliferation through mechanisms to regulate and control trade activities can also be used to tackle other priority challenges such as terrorism/piracy, smuggling of arms/drugs, and public health, while also addressing WMD-related issues.

At the regional level, Kassenova noted that several organizations focused on security, trade, and development have roles to play in promoting nonproliferation. Along with the obvious organizations such as ASEAN, the East Asia Summit, ARF, and APEC, there are others such as the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ), the Nuclear Energy Regulators Network (and its Nuclear Safety Subsector Network), and the ASEAN Maritime Forum. Some initiatives undertaken recently include exercises on responses to pandemics, development of a master plan on ASEAN connectivity, the development of counterterrorism action plans, and the Secure Trade in the APEC Region (STAR) initiatives undertaken by APEC members.

Kassenova concluded by offering recommendations for Asia Pacific organizations drawn from other regions. These include the development of region-wide requests for 1540 assistance, the development of model legislation for addressing proliferation-related issues, establishment of a clearinghouse for in-region expertise sharing and assistance, creation of a forum for coordinating regulating agencies in controlling WMD sensitive goods, promoting interoperability of enforcement agencies, and engaging in industry outreach to promote best practices within the region.

Li Genxin (Provisional Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Office), provided a useful summary of the activities of the CTBTO in anticipation of ratification of the CTBT. He argued that its extensive monitoring system could serve as a valuable confidence building measure that would promote transparency.

Termsak Chalermpalanupap (ASEAN Secretariat) offered a brief summary of his views on ASEAN involvement in WMD-related initiatives. He argued that lack of capacity continues to be a problem in many countries, especially when it comes to labor-intensive requirements as in submitting...
UNSCR 1540 reports. He also recognized new challenges in the region, including renewed interest in nuclear power and the implications that has for nuclear safety even as several countries in the region remain outside the IAEA and several have yet to ratify the CTBT. SEANWFZ is important, even though it is limited to nuclear issues. However, several issues remain unresolved or unimplemented including the provision for fact-finding mission, transit of foreign ships, accession of the five NWS, and the zone of coverage.

Discussion began on the alleged nuclear program in Myanmar. While some saw this as an opportunity to utilize the provision in the SEANWFZ Treaty that allows member states to request a fact-finding mission, others from Southeast Asia were reluctant to pursue this strategy. One felt that there was not sufficient evidence while another felt that there was no mechanism for actually submitting the request. Permutations of these views marked the remainder of the discussion. While several participants argued that regional organizations had an important role in promoting nonproliferation, others suggested that nonproliferation just wasn’t that high on the agenda of many countries and regional organizations and thus didn’t receive the attention it deserves. Other commentators picked up on the procedural issue, musing about the appropriate role of various organizations or asserting that one or another regional organization was best suited to take the lead.

During Session 7, Carl Baker (USCSCAP) provided an update on the CSCAP Memorandums that the study group has been working on. Comments provided during the recently completed member committee review were incorporated into the memorandum on peaceful use of nuclear energy. The memorandum will be circulated one last time to member committees and will be presented for final approval to the CSCAP Steering Committee in June. The CSCAP Memorandum on Disarmament is still in early draft. Several participants provided comments at the meeting and Baker asked that all comments be submitted not later than February 15. The draft will then be re-circulated to study group members and will be reviewed at the next study group meeting.

Session 8 was a wrap up session to provide participants the opportunity to suggest key findings of the meeting and offer suggestions for future topics to be addressed by the group. Several participants encouraged further pursuit of a next-generation initiative to promote better understanding of WMD-related issues in the region. Other suggestions included further investigation into the role of extended deterrence, missile defense, substitution of conventional capability, and delivery systems in promoting or discouraging disarmament. Another group of suggestions focused on more general issues related to disarmament: alternative pathways to disarmament, the prospects for a Nuclear Weapon Convention, the post-nuclear world security order, and revitalizing the Conference on Disarmament. Specific suggestions at the regional level included an examination of the role of SEANWFZ, the roles of regional organizations such as the East Asia Summit, APEC, ADMM Plus, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Other ideas suggested were to examine national implementation of UNSCR 1540 and the role of nonstate actors in nonproliferation and disarmament.

The meeting concluded with the co-chairs reminding the group that they would be developing a set of key findings to be presented at the ARF Inter-Sessional Meeting on Nonproliferation and Disarmament the following day. Those key findings are included here as Appendix 1. The date of the next meeting has not been decided but it is anticipated that it will be held in late 2011, perhaps in conjunction with the next ARF ISM.
The 13th meeting of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific was held in Las Vegas, Nevada on Feb. 21-22, 2011, involving over 60 security specialists from throughout the Asia-Pacific region, including from the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Nonproliferation and Disarmament (ARF ISM/NPD). All attended in their private capacities. Key findings and recommendations from this off-the-record meeting include:

There is general acceptance that the disarmament and nonproliferation pillars of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty are inter-related. There will not be progress on one without progress on the other.

While acknowledging the importance of recent US-Russian nuclear reductions, skepticism remains about the commitment of nuclear weapon states to disarmament amid frustration over the speed (or lack thereof) of implementation of follow-on actions contained in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document. There is a role for the ARF and CSCAP both in monitoring progress/compliance and in identifying areas that still need to be addressed.

There is a need to augment the NPT with other legally binding mechanisms and initiatives to enhance nuclear safety and security. The Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) and UNSCR 1540 are steps in that direction, but they must be further institutionalized and there is a need to develop clearly defined objectives and guiding principles for the 2012 NSS. The ARF and CSCAP can help in identifying agenda items and in focusing attention on nuclear safety and security challenges.

The US is seen as a key player in moving disarmament forward. While there seems to be a consensus in the US on the importance of nonproliferation and nuclear security, there are concerns that the US commitment to disarmament will not survive the current US administration.

New START is a step forward in the drive to reduce nuclear weapons. While more bilateral negotiations between Russia and the US are necessary, deep cuts will require multilateral negotiations and greater cooperation and transparency among other recognized and declared nuclear weapon states.

Substantive and enduring progress in disarmament depends on reducing or devaluing the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategies and a fundamental shift from the view that nuclear deterrence ensures international security. Policies, strategies, and inventories should be adjusted to reflect the declining role and value of nuclear weapons.

There is a perceived tension between strategic stability and regional security and a fear that arms reductions can undermine deterrence. There must be a better understanding of the relationship between weapons systems and both simple and extended deterrence.
There is little sign that the current North Korean leadership will negotiate away its nuclear weapon capabilities, but few viable options to a continuation of the Six-Party Talks, despite growing concerns over the ability of Pyongyang’s closest supporters to positively influence DPRK actions or serve as an honest broker. The UN Security Council has also been marginalized in dealing with the DPRK nuclear weapons program.

Given that all six-party participants are involved in the ARF and CSCAP, there is an opportunity for both to do more in moving the peninsula disarmament process forward, in addition to sending a strong message that Pyongyang’s current actions are unacceptable.

Disarmament is a process as well as a goal. Understanding the process and the systematic and practical steps it includes are essential to progress toward the goal. The ARF and CSCAP can contribute to this effort by identifying steps and specific means, time lines, and the sequencing necessary to achieve them.

Frustration with the Conference on Disarmament is reaching the breaking point; it is widely viewed as a dysfunctional institution, with little prospect of surmounting obstacles that hinder progress on disarmament talks. It needs to be revitalized, revamped, or replaced.

New approaches to disarmament are needed, including ones that leapfrog arms control or otherwise transform the process. The difficulties inherent in getting to zero should not prevent progress in moving toward zero.

Biological capabilities are spreading throughout the world and there are no clear distinctions among ‘have’ and have-not’ states. The range of biological threats has grown, encompassing not only state programs but also terrorist groups and even lone actors. The nature of biological materials and equipment makes it difficult to distinguish between offensive and peaceful work, yet there is comparatively little awareness of biological threats and how best to respond to them.

There is a growing awareness of the interconnections between health and security as outbreaks of disease necessitate many of the same responses regardless of whether their origin is natural, accidental, or deliberate. This provides opportunities for health and security sectors to work together more closely at the national, regional, and international levels to improve disease surveillance, detection, and response.

The dispersed and highly dual-use nature of biological research precludes simple approaches to verification and requires tailored responses and a more creative approach to ensuring compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) in advance of the BWC 2011 Review Conference. There is considerable expertise in the Asia Pacific region on bio-security and bio-safety. More effort should be made to spread that knowledge and promote best practices in the region and beyond. A register of experts would be useful.

Regional organizations such as the ARF have promoted nonproliferation initiatives, but more can be done. Recommendations include consolidating requests for UNSCR 1540 assistance, developing regional standards and benchmarks for domestic proliferation controls, better coordination between
regulating agencies, increasing interoperability between enforcement agencies, and serving as a clearinghouse for expertise-sharing and assistance.

All ARF members should be encouraged to adopt the NPT Additional Protocol, sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Chemical Weapons Convention, and Biological Weapons Convention, support a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, and honor their 1540 commitments.

As more ARF members turn toward the use of nuclear energy, greater cooperation is needed in promoting nuclear safety and security. The Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free-Zone (SEANWFZ) needs to be strengthened and endorsed by all ARF members. ASEAN members are encouraged to operationalize and utilize the “request for clarification” and “request for fact-finding missions” provisions of SEANWFZ to address current suspicions about DPRK-Myanmar nuclear-related collaboration and future regional requirements associated with the expanded use of nuclear power among ASEAN member states.

Regional proliferation-related nuclear fuel cycle concerns should be adequately addressed, for example, through consideration of enrichment and reprocessing-free zones and regional approaches to assuring fuel supplies and the safe and secure disposal of nuclear waste. Additional recommendations regarding regional cooperation, national legislation, verification and transparency, outreach and capacity building, and compliance with international regimes can be found in CSCAP Memorandum No. 17: Promoting the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy.

For more information, please contact CSCAP WMD Study Group co-chairs Ralph Cossa [RACPacForum@cs.com] or Nguyen Hung Son [nguyenhunson2005@yahoo.com]. These findings reflect the view of the seminar chairmen; this is not a consensus document.