

# TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS



2015 Report of the Joint Media Project







### HIROTSUGU TERASAKI

*Vice President, Soka Gakkai, Executive Director For Peace Affairs, Soka Gakkai International*

As we approach the historic juncture of the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there is a clear need to re-invigorate global momentum toward a world free from nuclear weapons. Growing concerns about nuclear proliferation coupled with the stagnation of efforts for nuclear disarmament add urgency to this quest.

In a recent IPS-Inter Press Service column, Daisaku Ikeda, president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), observed: “The key to bringing the history of nuclear weapons to a

close lies in ensuring that all actors—states, international organizations and civil society—take shared action, working with like-minded partners while holding fast to a deep commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons.” Indeed, nothing is more important now than shared action based on vision of our shared interests.

Up-to-date information and in-depth analysis can play a pivotal role in this regard, inspiring all stakeholders to work together to grapple with the daunting issues involved in nuclear weapons abolition. In order to raise public awareness, spark further debate and introduce civil society perspectives, in April 2009 SGI and IPS launched a joint media project on nuclear disarmament. As a global lay Buddhist movement committed to social engagement, SGI is grateful for this opportunity to collaborate in this way with IPS, whose goals and approach we deeply respect.

Since its establishment, SGI has been striving to create global grassroots networks among people committed to nuclear weapons abolition. In September 2007, we initiated the People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition as an international campaign to give voice to the aspirations of ordinary citizens, enabling them to be heard and to shape the international debate.

In December 2014, in the lead-up to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, SGI, together with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons (ICAN) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), organized an interfaith panel titled “Faiths United Against Nuclear Weapons: Kindling hope, mustering courage.”

The panel issued a joint statement as an outcome document which was then delivered at the intergovernmental conference. In the joint statement, people of faith pledged to continue grassroots efforts, awareness raising activities and dialogue both within and among their respective faith traditions toward the realization of a nuclear weapon-free world. We also expressed their strong support for international efforts to ban nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds and called for the commencement of negotiations by states on a new legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

SGI is determined to continue to develop collaborations with like-minded citizens and groups on a global basis in order to strengthen grassroots efforts toward our shared goal of ridding the world of the absolute evil of nuclear weapons. To this end, we hope that this joint media project will continue to serve as a useful platform for informing and raising people’s awareness about this issue, which is so critical to the future of humankind.



### BEATRICE FIHN

*Executive Director, ICAN - International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*

The last year has been tough, with violence, civil war, terrorism, health crises; natural disasters continue to plague the world. According to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people in the world has for the first time in the post-World War II era, exceeded 50 million people.

At times, working for a better, more humane world seems like a hopeless task. Yet, many of us still believe that it is possible. And that sometimes great achievements take

place, progress happens. All that is needed is that enough people decide to do something about it.

Nuclear weapons might not be killing hundreds of thousands of civilians today. But yet, over 15,000 nuclear warheads remain today, many on high alert, each one ready to demolish and obliterate cities within minutes of launch. Its effects can spread rapidly to neighboring countries, or even continents. And it can affect generations to come. It is the most destructive and inhumane weapon ever invented.

The international community is facing a real opportunity to do something that can contribute to a better, more safe world. After several decades, of deadlock, a movement to outlaw these weapons once and for all is growing.

The three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons have presented overwhelming humanitarian, environmental, economic and legal reasons for why nuclear weapons must be placed on the same legal footing as biological and chemical weapons – prohibited.

As an outcome of the third conference, the Austrian government issued a pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Throughout 2015, over 100 states have signed this humanitarian pledge and committed themselves to fill this legal gap.

The recently concluded 2015 Non-Proliferation Review Conference in New York failed to achieve a consensus outcome. Throughout the four weeks of negotiations, it was made clear that the nuclear weapon states are not interested in making any new commitments to disarmament, so now it is up to the rest of the world to start a process to prohibit nuclear weapons. The humanitarian pledge is the basis we need for these negotiations to begin.

As we are nearing the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, governments concerned about the humanitarian consequences committed to nuclear disarmament must now take matters into their own hands and launch a process to ban nuclear weapons.

Beatrice Fihn is the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and leads the campaigns work to ban nuclear weapons. She previously managed Reaching Critical Will, the disarmament programme of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

Image credit: Michael Day CC 2.0



This report is part of a project aimed at strengthening public awareness for a nuclear weapon free world.

The Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a lay Buddhist association, and IPS-Inter Press Service news agency initiated the project in April 2009, with a view to help shed light on the menace of atomic weapons from the perspectives of civil society through the global media network of IPS and its partners affiliated with the Global Cooperation Council.

The news articles, analysis and opinions in this report were published online between April 2014 and March 2015. These can be accessed freely on: [www.ipsnews.net/news/projects/nuclear-weapons](http://www.ipsnews.net/news/projects/nuclear-weapons) and [www.nuclearabolition.info](http://www.nuclearabolition.info).

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# Nuclear Threat Escalating Beyond Political Rhetoric

By THALIF DEEN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - As a new cold war between the United States and Russia picks up steam, the nuclear threat is in danger of escalating – perhaps far beyond political rhetoric.

Dr Randy Ryddel, a former senior political affairs officer with the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) told IPS he pities the general public.

“They’re being fed two competing narratives about nukes,” he said, in a realistic assessment of the current state of play.

“Oracle 1 says everybody’s rushing to acquire them or to perfect them.”

Oracle 2 forecasts a big advance for nuclear disarmament, as the bandwagon for humanitarian disarmament continues to gain momentum, said Dr Ryddel, a former senior counsellor and report director of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Commission.

“The irony is that if Oracle 2 is wrong, Oracle 1 will likely win this debate – and we’ll all lose,” he grimly predicted about the nuclear scenario.

In a recent cover story, the London Economist is unequivocally pessimistic: “A quarter of a century after the end of the cold war, the world faces a growing threat of nuclear conflict.”

Twenty-five years after the Soviet collapse, it said, the world is entering a new nuclear age.

“Nuclear strategy has become a cockpit of rogue regimes and regional foes jostling with the five original nuclear weapons powers (the U.S., Britain, France, China and Russia), whose own dealings are infected by suspicion and rivalry.”

Shannon Kile, senior researcher and head of the Nuclear Weapons Project at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) told IPS he agrees with the recent piece in The Economist that the world may be entering a “new nuclear age”.

“However, I would not narrowly define this in terms of new spending on nuclear weapons by states possessing them. Rather, I think it must be defined more broadly in terms of the emergence of a multi-polar nuclear world that has replaced the bipolar order of the cold war,” he added.

Kile also pointed out that nuclear weapons have become core elements in the defence and national security policies of countries in East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, where they complicate calculations of regional stability and deterrence in unpredictable ways.

This in turn raises risks that regional rivalries could lead to nuclear proliferation and even confrontation that did not exist when the nuclear club was smaller.

Meanwhile, the signs are ominous: the negotiations to prevent Iran going nuclear are still deadlocked.

Saudi Arabia has signed a new nuclear cooperation agreement, presumably for “peaceful purposes”, with South Korea; and North Korea has begun to flex its nuclear muscle.

On March 20, Hyun Hak Bong, North Korea’s ambassador to the UK, was quoted by Sky News as saying his country would use its nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack by the U.S.

“It is not the United States that has a monopoly on nuclear weapons strikes,” Hyun said.

“If the United States strike us, we should strike back. We are ready for conventional war with conventional war; we are ready for nuclear war with nuclear war. We do not want war but we are not afraid of war,” Hyun said.

The Economist also pointed out that every nuclear power is spending “lavishly to upgrade its atomic arsenal.”

Russia’s defence budget has increased by over 50 percent since 2007, a third of it earmarked for nuclear weapons: twice the share of France.

China is investing in submarines and mobile missile batteries while the United States is seeking Congressional

approval for 350 billion dollars for the modernisation of its nuclear arsenal.

Kile told IPS a subsidiary aspect of the “new nuclear age” is more technical in nature and has to do with the steady erosion of the operational boundary between nuclear and conventional forces.

Specifically, he said, the development of new types of advanced long-range, precision guided missile systems, combined with the increasing capabilities of satellite-based reconnaissance and surveillance systems, means that conventional weapons are now being given roles and missions that were previously assigned to nuclear weapons.

“This trend has been especially strong in the United States but we also see it in [the] South Asian context, where India is adopting conventional strike systems to target Pakistani nuclear forces as part of its emerging limited war doctrine.”

Kile also said many observers have pointed out that this technology trend is driving doctrinal changes that could lead to increased instability in times of crisis and raise the risk of the use of nuclear weapons.

“What these developments suggest to me is that while the overall number of nuclear warheads in the world has significantly decreased since the end of the cold war (with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989), the spectrum of risks and perils arising from nuclear weapons has actually expanded.”

Given that nuclear weapons remain uniquely dangerous because they are uniquely destructive, “I don’t think anyone will dispute that we must redouble our collective efforts aimed at reaching a world in which nuclear arsenals are marginalised and can be eventually prohibited,” he declared.

27 March 2015

Image credit: UN Photo / DB.





# France Sees Nuclear Arms As Deterrent

By A.D. McKENZIE

PARIS (IDN) - As world leaders prepare to meet in New York in April for the 2015 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), French activists say they are not holding their breath for any real commitment to enforce the 45-year-old accord.

France is the world's third nuclear-arms power, and while its official policy is that stockpiles should not be increased and that testing must be stopped, the Socialist government of François Hollande is not in favour of total nuclear disarmament.

Hollande's stance differs little in fact from that of his Conservative predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy, who believed that global disarmament must be based on "reciprocity" – a policy that means essentially 'we'll get rid of ours if you get rid of yours'.

The country has both maritime and air-based nuclear capability, and the government's position, outlined in a 2013 white paper, is that "nuclear deterrence" is a means of protecting "vital interests".

In February 2015, Hollande reiterated that policy in a speech at a French military air base, saying that possessing nuclear arms acts as a deterrent for enemies, in a "dangerous world".

"The current international context doesn't allow for any weakness, and there is no question of letting down one's guard," he said.

"One cannot rule out the possibility of future state conflicts that may concern us directly or indirectly," the president declared.

Disarmament activists counter this stance, warning that France is not fulfilling its obligations under the NPT. They say the country has equally lagged on measures agreed in 2010, when the previous Review Conference adopted a 64-point action plan to push forward implementation of the Treaty.

"There is no reduction of nuclear stockpiling taking place, so we need a treaty that completely bans nuclear weapons rather than banning proliferation," says Patrice Bouveret, director of the Observatoire des armements, an

independent French documentation and research centre devoted to peace-building.

"None of the engagements taken five years ago have resulted in anything concrete," Bouveret told IDN. "States need to now work on launching a different treaty because the current situation is just as ambiguous as it has been."

Bouveret's Observatoire des armements is a member of the Sortir du Nucléaire network (network for Phasing out the Nuclear Age), the main French anti-nuclear coalition that comprises 932 organisations and about 60,500 signatories.

The coalition supports "non-violent actions of civil disobedience" and will participate for instance in a 65-day protest to block Germany's Büchel military air base which has the last nuclear arms on German soil - stored due to an agreement with the United States.

The protest is a show of "opposition to the stationing of arms" at the base and is set to begin on March 26 and continue until the end of the Review Conference in New York, the group says.

Activists are calling for the original five nuclear-weapon states – France, the United Kingdom, China, the United States, and Russia – to do more to forward their own disarmament, even as they try to rein in the "new nuclear states" of North Korea, Israel, Pakistan, India and (perhaps) Iran.

Only P5 have dismantled testing site and fissile material production installations

France says that up to 2008, it reduced its number of air-launched weapons by a third, cutting its nuclear arsenal to "less than" 300 warheads. In February, for the first time, the government further quantified its nuclear weapons, with Hollande saying that the country has three sets of 16 submarine-launched ballistic missiles and 54 medium-range air-to-surface missiles.

France has also reported that it is the only one of the five original nuclear weapon states to have dismantled its testing site and fissile material production installations, and the government has pledged to continue campaigning for the "definitive end to the production of fissile material" for nuclear arms.

But with France and other countries sticking to the deterrence argument, the stakes remain high, and activists are watching to see what will happen at the April 27-May 22 Review Conference of the 1970 NPT.

"Speaking about disarmament remains complicated in our state," said 10 French parliamentarians in a message to the International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna in December 2014 with more than 1000 delegates attending.

"Too many high-ranking civilians and military officials perceive nuclear disarmament as an act of treason or threat to French security, increasing the complexity of the debate," said the message, which was notably signed by Hervé Morin, a former defence minister.

"This is a wrong perception, because France is diplomatically engaged 'to adopt policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons,'" the parliamentarians added.

They said that in order to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons, France and its government need to "understand the positive gains" of this process.

"Today too few of our colleagues have understood the risks posed by the worldwide arsenal of 16,300 nuclear weapons," said Jean-Marie Collin, director of the French branch of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), an international network that provides up-to-date information on nuclear-weapon policies.

It's clear, however that even if France wants to keep its own weapons, it does not want ownership to spread to "less stable" states. In his February address, Hollande slammed the "race" among some countries to acquire nuclear arms.

23 March 2015

Image: The French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and the American nuclear-powered carrier USS Enterprise (left), each of which carry nuclear-capable fighter aircraft

Image credit: U.S. Navy public domain.





# Israel and Iran Obstacles to Nuke Free Mideast Depending on Perspective

By MEL FRYKBERG

TEL AVIV | RAMALLAH (IDN) - Six world powers are looking towards the end of June to reach an agreement in regard to Iran's nuclear programme in return for lifting the sanctions imposed on the Islamic theocracy.

In the interim Iran's nuclear ambitions are once again dominating the headlines as the Western powers look to the end of March for an agreement on a political framework before June's deadline.

This framework agreement comes shortly before the next Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference from April 27 to May 22, 2015 at UN Headquarters in New York.

IDN spoke to Israeli and Palestinian experts on their perspectives in regard to a future Mideast free of nuclear weapons, the likelihood of this ever becoming a reality and what obstacles may prevent this goal from being achieved.

Ephraim Asculai, is a senior research fellow at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, an expert on Iran and nuclear issues facing the Middle East, and reflects Israel's conservative point of view.

"I'm not sure we will see any progress in the framework talks towards the June deadline," Asculai told IDN.

"Deadlines have come and gone and we are hearing conflicting views, nothing is official. Different sources are stating different opinions about reaching agreement with some sources outlining difficulties.

"The Iranians are very clever negotiators. Their main goal isn't an agreement that satisfies the international community but rather to get the international sanctions lifted.

"However, in order to get these lifted they need to be seen as having reached a compromise, while simultaneously not giving up their nuclear ambitions," said Asculai.

"They already have some capability for developing weapons and they don't want any international restrictions on their current capabilities," said Ascalai.

"I don't believe that Iran will attack Israel"

He added: "I don't think the Iranians are trying to develop a nuclear weapon at this point but they want advanced capabilities to be able to develop one should they feel threatened.

"Once they have the advanced capabilities, should they receive orders from the Iranian leadership to develop a weapon they will. Ultimately I think the Iranians are just postponing the inevitable."

Asculai believes that there is a possibility that regional Arab countries would also try to obtain nuclear weapons – should Iran's nuclear programme not be curbed – as part of a mutual Sunni defence against Shi'ite Iran.

Furthermore, Asculai said, Israel's nuclear weapons were not a factor in the Gulf countries possibly pursuing nuclear weapons programmes. He dismissed accusations that current Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu was being provocative in his constant accusations that Iran poses an existential threat to the Jewish state.

"I don't believe that Iran will attack Israel. The chances of that are very low. However, Netanyahu is right to be cautious in regard to Israel's security and Israel should reserve the right to attack Iran if necessary," Asculai told IDN.

"Iran consistently attacks Israel verbally. It has denied the Holocaust and this touches a raw nerve with Israelis.

"Teheran has also threatened to wipe Israel off the map which is a very dangerous game. Israel responds by defending itself verbally. Both sides are engaged in a war of word," he said.

"Israel is not a threat to Iran and it's not a case of Israelis being against Iranians. We used to have very good relations with that country prior to the Islamic republic coming into power."

Asculai believes that a nuclear-free Middle East is possible if Iran gives up its nuclear ambitions and decides to become a respected member of the international community.

"But at the moment they are not being transparent, they

are blocking nuclear inspectors from sites and they are lying about their capabilities," stated Ascalai.

In regard to whether the public is being told the full story, Asculai believes that the media has not been given access to the full story because of Iranian intransigence but that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is even handed and reporting what it knows.

"An agreement with Iran is possible"

However, Political scientist, Professor Samir Awad, from Birzeit University near Ramallah, disagrees with Asculai and challenged his analysis.

"I think there is a possibility of reaching an agreement with Iran. Iran has made it abundantly clear that it has no intention of pursuing a nuclear programme for military purposes and this claim has been supported by both the Russians and the Chinese," Awad told IDN.

"Iran wants to develop its nuclear programme for civilian purposes to help its economy develop, i.e. to have the same capabilities that are possessed by Germany, Japan, Brazil and South Africa.

"It aims to have sufficient nuclear technology for generating energy and has the same right as other countries to possess this. President Rohani wants to open the country up to the world.

"He doesn't want an isolated and secluded country where Iranians with their high standard of education and level of enterprise are stunted economically because of high unemployment and lack of international investment due to sanctions," said Awad.

"I think recently there has been a more positive approach to Iran by both the Americans and the Europeans.

"The Europeans are less sceptical and less afraid of Europe being threatened by a nuclear Iran.

It is also now less of a national issue of security for Americans and more of partisan politics with hard-line Republicans being anti-Iran and the Democrats being more in favour of reaching a settlement, explained Awad.

"Israel, meanwhile, is being absolutely hypocritical in its

approach to Iran by accusing Tehran of not being transparent in regard to its nuclear ambitions.

"However, Israel has the largest nuclear arsenal in the Middle East. In addition to being the strongest power in the region it is also the most belligerent and aggressive.

"Netanyahu has been using the alleged threat of a nuclear Iran as a way of winning political points, especially with the current Israeli election.

"Israelis tend to vote for far right-wing parties when they feel their security is under threat and Netanyahu is an expert at manipulating this for political vantage.

"The Iranian bogeyman is also a very convenient way of avoiding the issue of peace talks with the Palestinians by fabricating a larger more existential threat from Iran," said Awad.

"The fact remains that Israel's intelligence agency Mossad has stated that Iran is not working towards acquiring a nuclear bomb and neither do they want one.

"One should also ask why the proliferation theory should not apply to Israel. Why should Iran feel any less threatened by Israel already possessing over 250 nuclear warheads than Israel feeling threatened by Iran possibly wanting to develop them?"

Awad doesn't believe regional Arab countries want to obtain nuclear bombs but like Iran wants to develop nuclear facilities for domestic purposes.

"Egypt has signed a deal with Russia to build two nu-



clear reactors and the United Arab Emirates has signed a similar deal with France," said Awad.

Awad believes that Israel is the main obstacle to a nuclear-free Middle East.

"Even if Iran did have a nuclear bomb it wouldn't be so stupid as to attack Israel. Israel on the other hand appears

to have no real intention of giving up its occupation nor its nuclear weapons and this remains the biggest threat to peace in the region," Awad told IDN.

16 March 2015

Image credit: Pawel Ryszawa CC 4.0.



# Opinion: A Legally-Binding Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons

By RAY ACHESON

NEW YORK, Mar 6 2015 (IPS) - Five years after the adoption of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Action Plan in 2010, compliance with commitments related to nuclear disarmament lags far behind those related to non-proliferation or the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Yet during the same five years, new evidence and international discussions have emphasised the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and the unacceptable risks of such use, either by design or accident.

It is past time that the NPT nuclear-armed states and their nuclear-dependent allies fulfill their responsibilities, commitments, and obligations—or risk undermining the very treaty regime they claim to want to protect.

Thus the NPT's full implementation, particularly regarding nuclear disarmament, is as urgent as ever. One of the most effective measures for nuclear disarmament would be the negotiation of a legally-binding instrument prohibiting and establishing a framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Not everyone sees it that way.

In fact, ahead of the 2015 Review Conference (scheduled to take place in New York April 27-May 22), the NPT nuclear-armed states and some of their nuclear-dependent allies have argued that any such negotiations would “undermine” the NPT and that the Action Plan is a long-term roadmap that should be “rolled over” for at least another review cycle.

This is an extremely retrogressive approach to what should be an opportunity for meaningful action. Negotiating an instrument to fulfill article VI of the NPT would hardly undermine the Treaty.

On the contrary, it would finally bring the nuclear-armed states into compliance with the legal obligations.

Those countries that possess or rely on nuclear weapons often highlight the importance of the NPT for preventing proliferation and enhancing security.

Yet these same countries, more than any other states parties, do the most to undermine the Treaty by preventing, avoiding, or delaying concrete actions necessary for disarmament.

It is past time that the NPT nuclear-armed states and their nuclear-dependent allies fulfill their responsibilities, commitments, and obligations—or risk undermining the very treaty regime they claim to want to protect.

Their failure to implement their commitments presents dim prospects for the future of the NPT. The apparent expectation that this non-compliance can continue in perpetuity, allowing not only for continued possession but also modernisation and deployment of nuclear weapon systems, is misguided.

The 2015 Review Conference will provide an opportunity for other governments to confront and challenge this behaviour and to demand concerted and immediate action. This is the end of a review cycle; it is time for conclusions to be drawn.

States parties will have to not only undertake a serious assessment of the last five years but will have to determine what actions are necessary to ensure continued survival of the NPT and to achieve all of its goals and objectives, including those on stopping the nuclear arms race, ceasing the manufacture of nuclear weapons, preventing the use of nuclear weapons, and eliminating existing arsenals.

The recent renewed investigation of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is a good place to look for guidance. The 2010 NPT Review Conference expressed “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.”

Since then, especially at the series of conferences hosted by Norway, Mexico, and Austria, these consequences have increasingly become a focal point for discussion and proposed action.

Governments are also increasingly raising the issue of humanitarian impacts in traditional forums, with 155 states signing a joint statement at the 2014 session of the UN General Assembly highlighting the unacceptable harm caused by nuclear weapons and calling for action to ensure they are never used again, under any circumstances.

The humanitarian initiative has provided the basis for a new momentum on nuclear disarmament. It has involved new types of actors, such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the United Nations Office for Coordi-

nation of Humanitarian Affairs, and a new generation of civil society campaigners.

The discussion around the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons should be fully supported by all states parties to the NPT.

The humanitarian initiative has also resulted in the Austrian Pledge, which commits its government (and any countries that wish to associate themselves with the Pledge) to “fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.”

As of February 2015, 40 states have endorsed the Pledge. These states are committed to change. They believe that existing international law is inadequate for achieving nuclear disarmament and that a process of change that involves stigmatising, prohibiting, and eliminating nuclear weapons is necessary.

This process requires a legally-binding international instrument that clearly prohibits nuclear weapons based on their unacceptable consequences. Such a treaty would put nuclear weapons on the same footing as the other weapons of mass destruction, which are subject to prohibition through specific treaties.

A treaty banning nuclear weapons would build on existing norms and reinforce existing legal instruments, including the NPT, but it would also close loopholes in the current legal regime that enable states to engage in nuclear weapon activities or to otherwise claim perceived benefit from the continued existence of nuclear weapons while purporting to promote their elimination.

NPT states parties need to ask themselves how long we can wait for disarmament. Several initiatives since the 2010 Review Conference have advanced the ongoing international discussion about nuclear weapons.

States and other actors must now be willing to act to achieve disarmament, by developing a legally-binding instrument to prohibit and establish a framework for eliminating nuclear weapons. 2015, the year of the 70th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is a good place to start.

Image credit: UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré.





# The Two Koreas: Between Economic Success and Nuclear Threat

By AHN MI YOUNG

SEOUL (IPS) - The two Koreas are an odd match – both are talking about possible dialogue but both have different ideas of the conditions, and that difference comes from the 62-year-old division following the 1950-53 Korean War.

During this time, North Korea has become a nuclear threat – estimated to possess up to ten nuclear weapons out of the 16,300 worldwide (compared with Russia's 8,000 and the 7,300 in the United States) according to the Ploughshares Fund's report on world nuclear stockpiles – and South Korea has become the world's major economic success story.

In a national broadcast on Jan. 16, South Korean president Park Geun Hye presented her vision for reunification by using the Korean word 'daebak' (meaning 'great success' or 'jackpot'). "If the two Koreas are united, the reunited Korea will be a daebak not only for Korea but also for the whole world," she said.

North Korea has become a nuclear threat – estimated to possess up to ten nuclear weapons out of the 16,300 worldwide – and South Korea has become the world's major economic success story

Since she became leader of the South Korea's conservative ruling party in 2013, Park has been referring to a new world that would come from a unified Korea. Her argument has been that if the two Koreas are reunited, the world could be politically less dangerous – free from the North Korea's nuclear threat – and a united Korea could be economically more prosperous by combining the South's economic and cultural power and the North's natural resources and discipline.

Denuclearisation has been set as a key condition for daebak to come about. At a Feb. 9 forum with high-ranking South Korean officials, President Park said that "North Korea should show sincerity in denuclearisation efforts if it is to successfully lead its on-going economic projects. No matter how good are the programmes we may have in order to help North Korea, we cannot do so as long as North Korea does not give up its nuclear programme."

However, observers have said North Korea has no reason to give up its nuclear weapons as long as it depends on its nuclear capability as a bargaining chip for political survival. "Nuclear capabilities are the North's only military leverage to maintain its regime as it confronts the South's economic power," said Moon Sung Muk of the Korea Research Institute of Strategies (KRIS).

In fact, there are few signs of changes. North Korea has conducted a series of rocket launches, as well as three nuclear tests – all in defiance of the U.S. sanctions that are partially drying up channels for North Korea's weapons trade.

Amid recent escalating tension between Washington and Pyongyang over additional sanctions, activities at the 5-megawatt Yongbyon reactor in North Korea which produces nuclear bomb fuel are being closely watched to monitor whether the North may restart the reactor.

In the meantime, South Korea has been denying the official supply of food and fertilisers to North Korea under the South Korean conservative regimes that started in 2008.

During the liberal regime of 2004-2007, South Korea was the biggest donor of food and fertilisers to North Korea.

Then there appeared to be a glimmer of hope when North Korea's enigmatic young leader Kim Jong Un presented a rare gesture of reconciliation towards South Korea in his 2015 New Year's speech broadcast on Korean Central Television on Jan. 1.

"North and South should no longer waste time and efforts in (trying to resolve) meaningless disputes and insignificant problems," he said. "Instead, we both should write a new history of both Koreas ... There should be dialogue between two Koreas so that we can re-bridge the bond that was cut off and bring about breakthrough changes."

In his speech, the North Korean leader even went as far as suggesting a 'highest-level meeting' with the South Korean president. "If the South is in a position to improve inter-Korean relations through dialogue, we can resume high-level contacts. Also, depending on some circumstances and atmospheres, there is no reason we cannot

have the highest-level meeting (with the South)."

In South Korea, hopes for possible inter-Korean talks have been subdued. "What North Korea wants from dialogue with the South is not to talk about nuclear or human rights, but to have the South resume economic aid," said Lee Yun Gol, director of the state-run North Korea Strategic Information Centre (NKSIS).

The government in Seoul remains cautious about Pyongyang's peace initiatives. "We are seeing little hope for any rosy future in inter-Korean relationships in the near future, although we are working on how to prepare for the vision of 'daebak,'" said Ryu Gil Jae, South Korean reunification minister, in a Feb. 4 press conference.

North Korean observers have said that economic difficulties have been pushing the North Korean government to relax its tight state control over farm private ownership. North Korean farmers can now sell some of their products in markets nationwide, in a gradual shift towards privatised markets.

Further, according to Chinese diplomatic academic publication 'Segye Jisik', quoted by the South Korean news agency Yonhap News, the North Korean economy has improved since its new leader took office in 2012. From a 1.08 million ton deficit in stocks to feed the 20 million North Koreans in 2011, the deficit now stands at 340,000 tons.

According to observers, this report, if true, could send the signal that if North Korea is economically better off, it may be politically willing to reduce its dependence on the nuclear card in any bargaining process with South Korea.

U.S. sanctions have been used in the attempt to force North Korea to denuclearise, thus restricting North Korea's trade, and the U.S. government levied new sanctions against North Korea on Jan. 2 2015 in response to a cyberattack against Sony Pictures Entertainment. The FBI accused North Korea of the attack in apparent retaliation for the film, The Interview, a comedy about the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

But, while sanctions may work in troubling ordinary



North Koreans concerned with meeting basic food needs, they have little impact on the North Korean government. "North Korea's trade with China has become more prosperous and most of North Korea's deals with foreign partners are behind-the-scene deals," said Hong Hyun Ik, senior researcher at the Sejong Research Institute.

And, in response to the threat that it may be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC), on the basis of U.N. findings on human rights, Kim Jong Un reiterated: "Our thought and regime will never be shaken."

South Korea may now stand as the only hope for North Korea, as the United States and the United Nations gather to turn tough against the country over the human rights issue, and South Korea may find itself faced with a 'two-track' diplomacy between the hard-liner United States and its sympathy for the North Korean people.

In past decades, North Korea has usually played out a game with the United States and South Korea. "In recent year, the United States has been using 'stick diplomacy' against the North Korea, while South Korea may want

to shift to 'carrot diplomacy,'" said Moon Sung Muk of the Korea Research Institute of Strategies (KRIS).

"The Seoul government knows that the pace of getting closer to the North should be constrained by U.N. or U.S. moves," Moon added.

18 February 2015

Edited by Phil Harris

Image: World Leaders at 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul.

Image credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.



## Growing Support For Moving Away From Nuclear Weapons



By **JAMSHED BARUAH**

GENEVA (IDN) - Ahead of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) scheduled for April 27 to May 22, 2015 in New York, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) has expressed a clear vision for the future of nuclear disarmament.

The 33-member CELAC formally endorsed at its third annual summit in San José on January 28-29 the 'Austrian Pledge' delivered at the close of the Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (HINW) in December 2014 in Vienna.

The Austrian Pledge, delivered by Secretary-General of Austria's Foreign Ministry Michael Linhart on December 9, 2014 explained that the facts and findings of the Vienna Conference – as well as previous HINW conferences held in Oslo, Norway, on March 4-5, 2013 and Nayarit, Mexico, on February 13-14, 2014 – had shown that more diplomatic action was needed.

The Austrian Pledge recognised the existence of a “legal gap” in the international framework regulating nuclear weapons and called on all states to join in efforts to fill this legal gap by pursuing measures, which would stigmatise, prohibit and lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

While delivering the Austrian Pledge, Linhart also called on “nuclear weapons possessor states” to take “concrete interim measures to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons detonations, including reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons and moving nuclear weapons away from deployment into storage, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines, and rapid reductions of all types of nuclear weapons.”

The heads of state of CELAC countries issued a declaration at their third annual summit on January 28-29 in

San José, Costa Rica, fully supporting the outcomes of the Vienna conference. In doing so, CELAC became the first regional group of states to recognise that a treaty banning nuclear weapons is the best option to fill the legal gap:

“As has been demonstrated by the testimonies of survivors and evidence and scientific data, nuclear weapons constitute a serious threat to security, development of peoples and civilisation in general. Being consistent with our declarations, in this purpose we reiterate our strong support to call made in Vienna and Nayarit to initiate a diplomatic negotiation process of an internationally legally binding instrument for the prohibition nuclear weapons.”

Commenting the San José declaration, Carlos Umaña of the Costa Rican branch of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) said: “With the CELAC Declaration, Latin American and Caribbean states have recognised they intend to remain at the forefront of efforts which bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established a nuclear weapons free zone across the region, was the first multilateral treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons in a region — now Latin American and Caribbean states intend to work to promote a similar process that bans nuclear weapons internationally.”

According to the Ploughshares Fund, Russia, United States, France, China, Britain (five permanent members of the UN Security Council) and Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea possess a total of 16,300 nuclear weapons. “Of these, around 4,100 warheads are considered operational, of which about 1,800 US and Russian warheads are on high alert, ready for use on short notice,” says the Federation of American Scientists.

While the few nuclear-armed states have dominated the discussions on atomic weapons for decades, the humani-

tarian initiative on nuclear weapons has prompted a fundamental change in this conversation, with non-nuclear armed states leading the way in a discussion on the actual effects of the weapons, notes the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)

“The Austrian Pledge is a rallying call for states to demand action to fill an unacceptable legal gap. The momentum generated by the humanitarian initiative is paving the way for the commencement of a process to ban nuclear weapons. CELAC states have added their voices to the call. We expect other regions to do the same,” says Daniel Högsta of ICAN.

Growing support in Britain

There are indications of growing support for banning the bomb in Britain too. ICAN UK and the All Party Group on Weapons and the Protection of Civilians discussed in a parliamentary briefing on January 21 the implications for the UK's own nuclear weapons.

The meeting came just a day after a parliamentary debate on the renewal of Trident. During the debate, called by the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party, many members of parliament (MPs) pointed to the catastrophic risk of nuclear weapons due to intentional and accidental detonation.

The Labour Party's Katy Clarke noted that the abandonment of Trident would not only be a significant symbolic step towards nuclear disarmament, but would also have a significant impact internationally.

Another Labour Party MP Paul Flynn pointed out that the continued possession of nuclear weapons by certain states also tacitly encourages other states to maintain and develop their own, thereby actively thwarting disarmament efforts.

Other speakers during the debate also noted that, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the

UK has an obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith, and this obligation should be met by a nuclear weapons ban. “It is high time the Government stated their support for a new legal instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons that would complement our disarmament commitment under Article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty”, said Scottish National Party MP Angus Robertson.

Many at the meeting agreed that now – after the Vienna Conference and before the NPT Review at the UN headquarters in New York – is the time to push through the agenda.

Article VI of the 1970 NPT obliges all Parties to the Treaty to undertake “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control”. This is the world's only legally binding obligation on Nuclear Weapons States to reduce and ultimately eliminate their nuclear weapons. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, State Parties to the Treaty agreed on “13 practical steps” to meet their disarmament commitments.

These include entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions pending the CTBT taking effect, and negotiating in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) within five years. FMCT would prohibit the production of the two main components of nuclear weapons: highly-enriched uranium (HEU), and plutonium.

14 February 2015

Image credit: Michael Day CC 2.0



# Israel's Obsession for Monopoly on Middle East Nuclear Power



By **THALIF DEEN**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - As the Iranian nuclear talks hurtle towards a Mar. 24 deadline, there is renewed debate among activists about the blatant Western double standards underlying the politically-heated issue, and more importantly, the resurrection of a longstanding proposal for a Middle East free from weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Asked about the Israeli obsession to prevent neighbours – first and foremost Iran, but also Saudi Arabia and Egypt – from going nuclear, Hillel Schenker, co-editor of the

Jerusalem-based Palestine-Israel Journal, told IPS, “This is primarily the work of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has built his political career on fanning the flames of fear, and saying that Israel has to stand pat, with a strong leader [him] to withstand the challenges.”

And this is the primary motivation for his upcoming and very controversial partisan speech before the U.S. Congress on the eve of the Israeli elections, which has aroused a tremendous amount of opposition in Israel, in the American Jewish community and in the U.S. in general, he pointed out.

Iran, which has consistently denied any plans to acquire nuclear weapons, will continue its final round of talks involving Germany and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia (collectively known as P-5, plus one).

In early February 2015, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani asked the United States and Israel, both armed with nuclear weapons, a rhetorical question tinged with sarcasm: “Have you managed to bring about security for yourselves with your atomic bombs?”

The New York Times quoted the Washington-based Arms Control Association as saying Israel is believed to have 100 to 200 nuclear warheads.

The Israelis, as a longstanding policy, have neither confirmed nor denied the nuclear arsenal. But both the United States and Israel have been dragging their feet over the proposal for a nuclear-free Middle East.

Bob Rigg, a former senior editor with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), told IPS the U.S. government conveniently ignores its own successive National Intelligence Estimates, which represent the consensus views of all 13 or so U.S. intelligence agencies, that there has been no evidence, in the period since 2004, of any Iranian intention to acquire nuclear weapons.

“If Israel is the only nuclear possessor in the Middle East, this combined with the U.S nuclear and conventional capability, gives the U.S. and Israel an enormously powerful strategic lever in the region,” Rigg said.

He said this is even more realistic, especially now that Syria’s chemical weapons (CW) have been destroyed. They were the only real threat to Israel in the region.

“This dimension of the destruction of Syria’s CW has gone strangely unnoticed. Syria had Russian-made missiles that could have targeted population centres right throughout Israel,” said Rigg, a former chair of the New Zealand Consultative Committee on Disarmament.

A question being asked by military analysts is: why is

Israel, armed with both nuclear weapons and also some of the most sophisticated conventional arms from the United States, fearful of any neighbour with WMDs?

Will a possibly nuclear-armed Iran, or for that matter Saudi Arabia or Egypt, risk using nuclear weapons against Israel since it would also exterminate the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories? ask nuclear activists.

Schenker told IPS: “I believe that if Iran were to opt for nuclear weapons, the primary motivation would be to defend the regime, not to attack Israel. Still, it is preferable that they not gain nuclear weapons.”

Of course, he said, the fundamental solution to this danger would be the creation of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East.

That will require a two-track parallel process: One track moving towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the other track moving towards the creation of a regional regime of peace and security, with the aid of the Arab Peace Initiative (API), within which a WMD Free Zone would be a major component, said Schenker, a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament.

As for the international conference on a nuclear and WMD free zone before the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference, scheduled to begin at the end of April in New York, he said, the proposal is still alive.

In mid-March, the Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East initiative will convene a conference in Berlin, whose theme is “Fulfilling the Mandate of the Helsinki Conference in View of the 2015 NPT Review Conference”.

It will include a session on the topic featuring Finnish Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, the facilitator of the conference, together with governmental representatives from Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Germany.

There will also be an Iranian participant at the conference, said Schenker.

Rigg told IPS Israel’s first Prime Minister Ben Gurion wanted nuclear weapons from the outset. Israel was ap-

proved by the new United Nations, which then had only 55 or so members. Most of the developing world was still recovering from World War II and many new states had yet to emerge.

He said the United States and the Western powers played the key role in setting up the U.N.

“They wanted an Israel, even though Israeli terrorists murdered Count Folke Berdadotte of Sweden, the U.N. representative who was suspected of being favourable to the Palestinians,” Rigg said.

The Palestinians were consulted, and said no, but were ignored, he said. Only two Arab states were then U.N. members. They were also ignored. Most of today’s Muslim states either did not exist or were also ignored.

“When the U.N. approved Israel, Arab states attacked, but were beaten off. They did not want an Israel to be transplanted into their midst. They still don’t. Nothing has changed.”

Given the unrelenting hostility of the Arab states to the Western creation of Israel, he said, Israel developed nuclear weapons to give itself a greater sense of security.

“If Israel lost its regional monopoly on nuclear weapons, it would be vulnerable. So the U.S. goes all out to block nuclear weapons – except for Israel,” he added.

Not even Israel argues that Iran has nuclear weapons now.

“A NW free zone in the Middle East is simply a joke. If Israel joined the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it would have to declare and destroy its nuclear arsenal.”

The U.S. finds excuses to avoid prodding Israel into joining the NPT. The U.S. is effectively for nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, but successive U.S. presidents have refused to publicly say that Israel has nuclear weapons, he added.

Because of all this, a NWF zone in the ME is not a real possibility, even if U.S. President Barack Obama and Netanyahu are at each other’s throats, said Rigg.

Schenker said Netanyahu’s comments come at a time

when the 22-member League of Arab States, backed by the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have, since 2002, presented Israel an Arab Peace Initiative (API).

The API offers peace and normal relations in exchange for the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and an agreed upon solution to the refugee problem.

This doesn’t mean that the danger of nuclear proliferation isn’t a problem in the Middle East, said Schenker.

“As long as Israel has retained a monopoly on nuclear weapons, and promised to use them only as a last resort, everyone seemed to live with the situation.”

The challenge of a potential Iranian nuclear weapons programme would break that status quo, and create the danger of a regional nuclear arms race, he noted. Unfortunately, the global community is very occupied with the challenge of other crises right now, such as Ukraine and the Islamic State.

“So it is to be hoped the necessary political attention will also be focused on the challenges connected to the upcoming NPT Review conference, and the need to make progress on the Middle Eastern WMD Free Zone track as well,” he declared.

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Edited by Kitty Stapp

Image credit: J R (Flickr) CC BY 2.0.



# Marshall Islands Nuclear Proliferation Case Thrown Out of U.S. Court

By JOHN BUTLER

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - A lawsuit by the Marshall Islands accusing the United States of failing to begin negotiations for nuclear disarmament has been thrown out of an American court.

The Marshall Islands is currently pursuing actions against India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom in the International Court of Justice, for failing to negotiate nuclear disarmament as required in the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Action against the U.S. had been filed in a federal court in California, as the United States does not recognise the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ.

David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, said the U.S. conducted 67 nuclear weapons tests in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958, the equivalent of 1.6 Hiroshima bombs detonating daily for 12 years.

Despite documented health effects still plaguing Marshallese islanders, U.S. Federal Court judge Jeffrey White dismissed the motion on Feb. 3, saying the harm caused by the U.S. flouting the NPT was “speculative.”

White also said the Marshall Islands lacked standing to bring the case, and that the court’s ruling was bound by the “political question doctrine” – that is, White ruled the question was a political one, not a legal one, and he therefore could not rule for the Marshalls.

Krieger, whose Nuclear Age Peace Foundation supports Marshall Islands in its legal cases, called the decision “absurd.”

“I think it was an error in his decision. There were very good grounds to say the Marshall Islands had standing, and this shouldn’t have been considered a political question,” he told IPS.

“The Marshall Islands know very well what it means to have nuclear bombs dropped on a country. They’ve suffered greatly, it’s definitely not speculative.”

The foundation of the multiple cases brought by the

Marshall Islands was that the U.S., and other nuclear powers, had not negotiated in good faith to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. White ruled it was “speculative” that the failure of the U.S. to negotiate nuclear non-proliferation was harmful.

Krieger said the Marshalls would appeal the decision to the Ninth Circuit of Appeals. He said the decision set a troubling precedent regarding U.S. adherence to international agreements.

“The U.S. does not accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ, and in this case, the judge is saying another country does not have standing [in an American court]. In essence, it means any country that enters into a treaty with the U.S. should think twice,” he said.

“Another country will be subject to the same decision of the court. Where does that leave a country who believes the U.S. is not acting in accordance with a treaty?”

“By side-stepping the case on jurisdictional grounds, the U.S. is essentially saying they will do what they want, when they want, and it’s not up to the rest of the world whether they keep their obligations.”

Krieger said that the judge’s comments about the “speculative” nature of the case meant essentially that a nuclear accident or war would have to break out before such a case for damages could be heard.

“It’s saying a state must wait until some kind of nuclear event, before damages won’t be speculative,” he said. “It’s absurd that the claim that the U.S. has not fulfilled its obligations to negotiate in good faith to end the nuclear arms race, is called ‘speculative’ by the judge.”

Marshall Islands had intended to pursue all nine nuclear powers – the U.S., China, Russia, Pakistan, India, the U.K., France, North Korea and Israel – in the ICJ on their failure to negotiate for nuclear non-proliferation.

The Marshall Islands is still pursuing cases in the ICJ against Pakistan, India and the U.K., but John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, said the other cases had stalled as those nations did not accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ.

“The other six states, the Marshall Islands invited and urged them to come before the court voluntarily, which is a perfectly normal procedure, but none of them have done so,” Burroughs told IPS.

Burroughs, also a member of the international team in the ICJ, said China had explicitly said it would not appear before the court.

“Any of those countries could still agree to accept the court’s jurisdiction,” he said.

He said preliminary briefs had been filed in the India and Pakistan cases, with responses due by mid-2015. A brief will be served on the U.K. case in March.

Burroughs said he doubted the decision in U.S. federal court would impact the cases in The Hague.

“I don’t see the decision having any effect at all,” he said.

12 Feb 2015

Edited By Kitty Stapp

Image credit: United States Department of Defense Public Domain.





# Dangerous Nuclear War Of Words Between NATO and Russia

By JULIO GODOY

BERLIN (IDN) - The governments of Russia and the United States are using the Ukraine crisis as a justification for upgrading their formidable nuclear arsenals.

This escalation became evident January 25, as the conservative German Sunday newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung (FAS) opened its edition with a whole page devoted exclusively to accuse Russia of “threatening gesturing” with its nuclear weapons.

Under the headline “Atom weapons come again into play“, the FAS reported, without giving any source, of a long list of incidents involving Russian military “nuclear capable” – mind the ambiguity, for it is important – vehicles, from armoured tanks to aircraft, all allegedly occurred during December 2014 to January 2015.

The paper goes as far as to claim that the next North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) meeting of defence ministers, to take place February 5 in Brussels, Belgium, will be devoted to analyse “the aggressive way Russia is targeting its nuclear capabilities against” NATO members, in Europe and North America, and its unofficial allies, such as the Ukraine.

Apart from the anonymity of its sources, the alarmist nature of the FAS report includes an important misrepresentation: It claims that until the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 the NATO felt under pressure to reduce its own nuclear arsenals.

Quite the opposite is true: Under the leadership of the present U.S. government, and despite president Barack Obama’s celebrated speech in the Czech capital Prague in 2009, during which he stated “clearly and with conviction America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons”, the NATO in 2010 launched a substantial modernisation of its nuclear arsenal, of some 180 B-61 nuclear bombs, deployed in Europe. The official cost of this modernisation programme amounts to at least 10 billion U.S. dollars.

This programme is but a tiny part of a whole process of massive renovation of the U.S. nuclear weapons facilities, from the actual bombs to research centres and industries,

which is expected to cost more than 355 billion U.S. dollar over a period of ten years. But, as Lawrence Wittner, professor of history at the State University of New York/Albany, and author of the scholarly trilogy entitled “The Struggle Against the Bomb”, says in his most recent blog entry, the cost is scheduled to soar after this renovation, when an array of new nuclear weapons will be produced.

Wittner recalls that the Obama government “has asked the Pentagon to plan for 12 new nuclear missile-firing submarines, up to 100 new nuclear bombers, and 400 new (or refurbished) land-based nuclear missiles. According to outside experts and a bipartisan, independent panel commissioned by Congress and the Defence Department, that will bring the total price tag for the U.S. nuclear weapons build-up to approximately one trillion U.S. dollars.”

Such extraordinary nuclear build-up has disappointed many Obama supporters, as the New York Times (NYT) reported in September 2014. The NYT quotes Sam Nunn, former U.S. senator, whose writings on nuclear disarmament deeply influenced Obama, as saying: “A lot of (Obama’s nuclear weapons policies) is hard to explain. The president’s vision was a significant change in direction (in the nuclear weapons debate). But the process has preserved the status quo.” Actually, Obama’s nuclear expansion policies have worsened that status quo.

This context makes the German newspaper’s assertion the most startling, in addition to the fact that the modernisation of NATO’s nuclear arsenal deployed in Europe was adopted against the express opposition of the foreign ministry in Berlin.

More than a ‘Life Extension Programme’

The modernisation of NATO’ nuclear arsenal, approved in 2010, is officially called “a full-scope Life Extension Programme (LEP)” of the B-61 bombs. These bombs are deployed in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey, all members of the U.S.-led military alliance.

According to the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the B61-12 Life Extension Programme (LEP), now in its fourth year of development engineering, includes “refurbishment of both nuclear and non-nuclear

components to address aging, ensure extended service life, and improve safety, reliability and security of the bomb. With the incorporation of an Air Force tail kit assembly, the B61-12 will replace the existing B61-3, -4, -7, and -10 bombs. Moreover, fielding the B61-12 will enable the retirement of the B83, the last U.S. megaton class weapon, in the mid to late 2020s.”

Independent analysts of the LEP say such modernisation won’t mean only “a life extension programme”, but instead a formidable increase of NATO’s nuclear capabilities.

Hans M. Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, and one of the most distinguished civil experts on nuclear weapons, says that new features of the weapons contradict early pledges by U.S. authorities that the LEP “will not support new military missions (n)or provide for new military capabilities.”

However, new information about the LEP indicates precisely the contrary.

“The addition of a guided tail kit will increase the accuracy of the B61-12 compared with the other weapons and provide new warfighting capabilities,” Kristensen says. “The tail kit is necessary, officials say, for the 50-kilotons B61-12 (with a reused B61-4 warhead) to be able to hold at risk the same targets as the 360-kilotons B61-7 warhead. But in Europe, where the B61-7 has never been deployed, the guided tail kit will be a significant boost of the military capabilities – an improvement that doesn’t fit the promise of reducing the role of nuclear weapons.”

For comparison, the ‘Little boy’ nuclear bomb, with which the U.S. destroyed on August 6, 1945 the Japanese city of Hiroshima, had an explosive yield of between 13 and 18 kilotons. The ‘Fat man’ bomb that destroyed Nagasaki three days later had a yield of up to 22 kilotons.

During hearings at the U.S. House of Representatives, carried out in October 2013, it became also clear that B61-12 would replace the old B61-11, a single-yield 400-kiloton nuclear earth-penetrating bomb introduced in 1997, and the B83-1, a strategic bomb with variable yields up to 1,200 kilotons.

For Kristensen, “The(se) military capabilities of the B61-12 will be able to cover the entire range of military targeting missions for gravity bombs, ranging from the lowest yield of the B61-4 (0.3 kilotons) to the 1,200-kilo-

ton B83-1 as well as the nuclear earth-penetration mission of the B61-11.”

Such increasing in destructive capabilities would make the new arsenal an “all-in-one nuclear bomb on steroids, spanning the full spectrum of gravity bomb missions anywhere,” Kristensen points out.

The FAS report is the last in a series of articles and studies, published by U.S. and European media and think-thank institutes, all based on NATO leaks, or on rumours. One widespread rumour, for instance, claims that Russia has deployed Iskander-M short-range ballistic missiles in Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula in the Black Sea Moscow annexed in 2014.

The source of the rumour is a video available on the Internet, which allegedly shows Russian ballistic missile launchers rolling through downtown Sevastopol. But nuclear weapons experts, such as Kristensen, consider that the video in question shows no Iskander missiles, but instead Bastion-P (K300P or SSC-5) coastal defence cruise missiles.

Breedlove – Dr. Strangelove

Other reports in Western media are not so clear-cut misrepresentations, but at least ambiguous enough as to cause alarm about the Russian nuclear arsenal. In November 2014, NATO’s top commander U.S. Gen. Philip Breedlove – all resemblances with the character in Stanley Kubrick’s nuclear war satire “Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb”, are real life ironies – claimed that Russia was reinforcing its bases in Crimea.

Breedlove admitted that the NATO does not possess information whether the Russian military operations included the deployment of nuclear weapons.

Breedlove only said at the occasion that Russian forces “capable of being nuclear” were being moved to the Crimean Peninsula.

To quote Hans Kristensen again: “Th(is) uncertainty about what’s being moved to Crimea and what’s stored there illustrates the special problem with non-strategic nuclear forces: because they tend to be dual-capable and serve both nuclear and conventional roles, a conventional deployment can quickly be misinterpreted as a nuclear signal or escalation whether intended or real or not.”

Kristensen adds: “The uncertainty about the Crimea

situation is similar (although with important differences) to the uncertainty about NATO’s temporary rotational deployments of nuclear-capable fighter-bombers to the Baltic States, Poland, and Romania. Russian officials are now using these deployments to rebuff NATO’s critique of Russian operations.”

Again, independent experts consider talk of such operations exaggerated, because neither the Soviet Union nor today’s Russia deployed nuclear arsenal in Crimea since 1950s until today.

The rhetoric on nuclear weapons is not confined to NATO or the U.S. government. In November 2014, almost simultaneous to Breedlove’s press conference, the Russian newspaper Pravda published a comment titled “Russia prepares nuclear surprise for NATO” in which it claimed that, as of today, “Russia’s strategic nuclear forces (SNF) are even more advanced in comparison with those of the US, as they ensure parity on warheads with a significantly smaller number of carriers of strategic nuclear weapons.”

Return to Cold War hard times

This gap between Russia and the United States, the formerly official Soviet newspaper goes on as if it were a matter of pride, “may only grow in the future, given the fact that Russian defence officials promised to rearm Russia’s SNF with new generation missiles.”

Russia and the NATO possess some 15,000 nuclear weapons, about 93 percent of the whole world’s total nuclear arsenal. This formidable capacity of global devastation, obsolete and implying high maintenance costs, constitutes, as Obama put it in his Prague speech, the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War.

And yet, to no surprise to independent analysts, both sides have grabbed the first opportunity, the Ukraine crisis, to justify their nuclear build-up. For the U.S., the Ukraine crisis was a welcome chance to retighten its relations with the European Union, badly damaged after the revelations that the National Security Agency and other U.S. intelligence agencies have been tapping all electronic communications between Gibraltar and Berlin, including the cellular phones of heads of allied governments.

In addition to assuring European NATO members’ mute support for the costly B61-12 LEP, the U.S. also needed a major crisis to force European governments to accept the highly unpopular Transatlantic Trade and Investment

Partnership (TTIP), as well as to wipe out all chances for political asylum for Edward Snowden.

For Russia, the crisis brought evidence that it was about time to stop behaving as a supplicant, as Michael Krepon, another U.S expert on nuclear arms control, has said.

Commenting on yet another victim of the new war of nuclear words between Russia and the NATO, the unceremonious end of the so called Nunn-Lugar cooperative threat reduction act, Krepon writes, “A quarter-century after the Cold War ended, bilateral relations have again reverted to hard times. The (Nunn-Lugar) programmes are now deemed unnecessary and inappropriate by Russian President Vladimir Putin and by majorities in both houses of the U.S. Congress. Russia is no longer a supplicant, and the U.S. Congress is no longer feeling generous.”

The Nunn-Lugar act aimed at securing and dismantling former Soviet nuclear arsenals deployed in former Soviet territories, in such states as Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Or, to quote Dmitri Trenin, director of the Carnegie Moscow Centre, and one of the most distinguished peace researchers in Russia: “The political crisis that erupted in Ukraine in early 2014 has ended the period in Russian-Western relations that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The crisis marks the end of a generally cooperative phase in those relations (...). Instead, the Ukraine crisis has opened a new period of heightened rivalry, even confrontation, between former Cold War adversaries.” They are in fact more than armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons.

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30 January 2015



## New Zealand Robustly Defends Nuclear Ban



By **NEENA BHANDARI**

SYDNEY (IDN) – The small Pacific island country of New Zealand has punched above its weight in the international disarmament debate. For nearly three decades it has pursued an active nuclear free policy, banning entry of US warships carrying nuclear weapons or propelled by nuclear power into its ports despite being part of the ANZUS Treaty. NZ, along with the United States (US) and Australia, was amongst the three original signatory governments to the ANZUS treaty, a trilateral framework

for security arrangements and cooperation, which was concluded in 1951.

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, New Zealand opposed French nuclear tests in the Pacific. In 1983, the visit of the nuclear-powered frigate USS Texas sparked protests. Ordinary people spurred an anti-nuclear movement, which reached its peak in the mid-1980s and shaped NZ's foreign policy and identity as a nation.

“It was an extremely broad campaign, which included professionals, neighbourhood groups, students, religious,

non-religious, young and old. In many ways, it was the diversity and the non-hierarchical nature of the movement that was part of its appeal and strength. At one point there were over 300 local activist groups across the country,” says Marie Leadbeater, the author of ‘Peace, Power and Politics: How New Zealand became nuclear free.

The defining moment came in July 1985 with the sinking of the Greenpeace flagship, Rainbow Warrior, which had been involved in protests over French nuclear testing.

The then Prime Minister David Lange said: “There is only one thing more dangerous than being attacked by nuclear weapons and that is being protected by them.” In 1987, the Labour government passed the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act.

“The legislation is now so well entrenched in the New Zealand psyche, that no party would propose rescinding it in the future. The National Party (the leader of the current government) has now said explicitly that they would not repeal that legislation,” Maryan Street, former NZ Labour Party Spokesperson on Disarmament and Arms Control, told IDN.

Agrees Kennedy Graham, Green Party MP with responsibility for global affairs. “There is multi-party support now for New Zealand's Nuclear Free Zone legislation.”

The US Government has not attempted to overturn NZ's nuclear ban, but in the past five years it has begun to re-establish defence and strategic ties with New Zealand. In November 2010, the then US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and the then NZ Foreign Minister Murray McCully, signed the Wellington Declaration, which laid the framework for a new strategic partnership between the two countries.

In June 2012, the Washington Declaration further enhanced defence cooperation arrangements that included maritime security, counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and anti-piracy. Under this agreement, NZ agreed to join RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific), the world's largest maritime exercise, and joint exercises with the US and Australian forces.

Cautions Nic Maclellan, author and researcher: “We should be careful and not glorify NZ's position too much as it is changing. Recent revelations by Wikileaks and Edward Snowden have highlighted the level of engagement between the ANZUS allies and the five party UKUSA agreement also known as the ‘Five Eyes Treaty’, whereby the UK, Canada and the ANZUS allies share signals intelligence.”

NZ has two signals intelligence bases in Tangimoana and Waihopai. Leadbeater says, “I opposed NZ's participation in the UKUSA agreement on account of its lack of transparency and it's potential to make us party to spying on other nations and even contributing to wars.”

The ANZUS allies are also part of the Quadrilateral

Defence Coordinating Group with France as an observer. So is there renewed pressure from the US on NZ to join the nuclear umbrella?

“The US understands that our nuclear legislation is a no-go area and works with us around it. They see us as a leader in the area on non-proliferation and disarmament. We were also invited by US President Barack Obama to attend the security conference on the threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists,” Street, who is also the former Chair of NZ Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, told IDN.

Dangers lurking

NZ's clean green image further promoted as 100% Pure by the Tourism NZ campaign is partly to do with the country being nuclear free. It doesn't have nuclear power so the chances of a localised accident occurring are slim.

But Street warns: “The most real danger would be in the transporting of nuclear waste through our waters (eg: depleted uranium, yellow cake from Australia, etc.). There is no protection against that happening and therefore we would be vulnerable to an accident occurring to any of those vessels. Protection against that would require new legislation around hazardous goods and substances.”

NZ has been very active in highlighting the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in direct contrast to Australia. By October 2014, 155 countries had signed the NZ-led UN statement on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

“Given the width of support for the New Zealand initiative among members of the UN it seems to me that the time is right to nail down the illegality of nuclear weapons through international agreement. Now New Zealand is on the Security Council and I hope we will keep our foot on the pedal and advance strongly the cause of nuclear disarmament,” wrote former NZ Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Palmer in an article ‘The Nuclear Nightmare’ in November 2014.

The International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on Nuclear Weapons in 1996 had stated: “The destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in either space or time. They have the potential to destroy all civilisation and the entire ecosystem of the planet.”

Today, the anti-nuclear movement is not very active in NZ, but there is a strong small core group of people, who

are active in global anti-nuclear activities.

As Kate Dewes, a nuclear abolition activist who has carried on this fight for over three decades told IDN, “There are a few groups, both national and local, which have members on the government appointed Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control (PACDAC), who give advice as to what the government should be doing to implement the NZ Disarmament and Arms Control Act of 1987. Some groups meet regularly with the Ambassador for Disarmament and ministry officials to encourage them to take leadership on current disarmament issues such as nuclear abolition, banning of landmines, cluster and depleted uranium munitions, and the Arms Trade Treaty.”

“The New Zealand population will never accept a role in upholding nuclear deterrence under the ‘nuclear umbrella’. We have won that debate and young New Zealanders are very proud of our nuclear free policy”, added Dewes, quoting a 1986 opinion poll that confirmed that 92 percent New Zealanders opposed nuclear weapons and 69 percent opposed warship visits; 92 percent wanted NZ to promote nuclear disarmament through the UN, while 88 percent supported the promotion of nuclear-free zones.

Successive opinion polls in Australia have shown that Australians overwhelmingly reject nuclear weapons. “Yet our government, in deference to the US, remains opposed to the idea of a treaty banning these ultimate weapons of mass destruction. We are calling on the government to rule out any role for nuclear weapons in our nation's military doctrines, just as New Zealand did in the 1980s, and to join efforts to achieve a global ban”, Australia Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Tim Wright, told IDN.

Australia is part of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and like NZ, Australia also has nuclear-free legislation, the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty Act 1986. “However, this legislation (and the treaty itself) doesn't prevent US nuclear-armed vessels from entering Australian ports, nor does it prevent Australia from maintaining its policy of extended nuclear deterrence”, says Wright.

26 January 2015

Image: Mururoa atoll, New Zealand, former French Nuclear test site

Credit: NASA / Public domain.



# Obama-Congress Iran Sanctions Battle Goes International

By JASMIN RAMSEY

WASHINGTON (IPS) - While it's anyone's guess whether a final deal will be reached over Iran's nuclear programme in 2015, a number of key international actors have forcefully weighed in on calls from within the U.S. congress to impose more sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

President Barack Obama reiterated his threat to veto new Iran-related sanctions bills while talks are in progress during his State of the Union (SOTU) address in January 2015.

"It doesn't make sense," he said Jan. 20 in his second to last SOTU. "New sanctions passed by this Congress, at this moment in time, will all but guarantee that diplomacy fails—alienating America from its allies; and ensuring that Iran starts up its nuclear programme again."

The administration's call to "give diplomacy with Iran a chance" was echoed a day later by key members of the P5+1 (U.S., U.K., France, Russia, China plus Germany), which is negotiating with Iran over its nuclear programme, through an op-ed in the Washington Post.

"...[I]ntroducing new hurdles at this critical stage of the negotiations, including through additional nuclear-related sanctions legislation on Iran, would jeopardise our efforts at a critical juncture," wrote Laurent Fabius (France), Philip Hammond (U.K.), Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Germany) and Federica Mogherini (EU) on Jan. 21.

"New sanctions at this moment might also fracture the international coalition that has made sanctions so effective so far," they continued. "Rather than strengthening our negotiating position, new sanctions legislation at this point would set us back."

In January 2015, during a joint press conference with Obama at the White House, the U.K.'s Prime Minister David Cameron admitted he had contacted members of the U.S. Senate to urge against more sanctions on Iran at this time.

"[Y]es, I have contacted a couple of senators this morning and I may speak to one or two more this afternoon," he told reporters on Jan. 16.

"[I]t's the opinion of the United Kingdom that further sanctions or further threat of sanctions at this point won't

actually help to bring the talks to a successful conclusion and they could fracture the international unity that there's been, which has been so valuable in presenting a united front to Iran," said Cameron.

In what has been widely perceived by analysts as a rebuff to Obama's Iran policy, reports surfaced the day after Obama's SOTU that the House of Representatives Speaker John A. Boehner had invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—who has made no secret of his opposition to Obama's approach to Iran—to address a joint session of Congress on Feb. 11.

Netanyahu accepted the invitation, but changed the date to Mar. 3, when he would be visiting Washington for a conference hosted by the prominent Israel lobby group, the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

The invite, which was not coordinated with the White House, clearly surprised the Obama administration, which said it would not be receiving the Israeli prime minister while he is in town, citing a policy against receiving foreign leaders close to election dates (the Israeli election will be in March).

While Netanyahu has long recommended hard-line positions on what a final deal over nuclear program should entail—including "non-starters" such as zero-percent uranium enrichment on Iranian soil—he cannot be faulted for accepting the speaker's invitation, according to the U.S.'s former ambassador to NATO, Robert E. Hunter, who told IPS: "If there is fault, it lies with the Speaker of the House."

"If the Netanyahu visit, with its underscoring of the political potency of the Israeli lobby on Capitol Hill, is successful in ensuring veto-proof support in the Senate for overriding the threatened Obama veto of sanctions legislation, that would saddle Boehner and company with shared responsibility not only for the possible collapse of the nuclear talks...but also for the increased chances of war with Iran," he said.

But there's no guarantee at this point whether the bills at the centre of the battle—authored by Republican Mark Kirk and Democrat Bob Menendez, and another by the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob

Corker—will garner the veto-proof majority necessary to become legislation.

With the support of the Democratic leadership in Congress, the administration has so far successfully prevented the Kirk-Menendez bill from coming to the floor since it was introduced in 2013.

A growing number of current and former high-level officials have also voiced opposition to more sanctions at this time.

"Israeli intelligence has told the U.S. that rolling out new sanctions against Iran would amount to 'throwing a grenade' into the negotiations process," Secretary of State John Kerry told CBS News on Jan. 21.

"Why would we want to be the catalyst for the collapse of negotiations before we really know whether there is something we can get out of them?" asked former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton after opposing new sanctions during a forum in Winnipeg, Canada.

"We believe that new sanctions are not needed at this time," the Under Secretary of Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen told the Wall Street Journal.

"To the contrary, new sanctions at this time, even with a delayed trigger, are more likely to undermine, rather than enhance, the chances of achieving a comprehensive agreement," he said.

While the battle isn't over yet, in the wake of Obama's veto threat and Boehner's invitation to Bibi, even some of the Democratic co-sponsors of the original Kirk-Menendez bill appear to be moving in the White House's direction.

"I'm considering very seriously the very cogent points that [Obama's] made in favour of delaying any congressional action," Senator Richard Blumenthal told Politico.

"I'm talking to colleagues on both sides of the aisle. And I think they are thinking, and rethinking, their positions in light of the points that the president and his team are making to us," he said.

23 January 2015

Image credit: Lawrence Jackson Public Domain





# Three Minutes Away from Doomsday

By **LEILA LEMGHALEF**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - Unchecked climate change and the nuclear arms race have propelled the minute hand of the Doomsday Clock forward two minutes closer to midnight, from its 2012 placement of five minutes to midnight.

The decision was announced in Washington DC by members of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS), the body behind the calculations and creation of the 1947 Clock of Doom.

The last time the clock was at three minutes to midnight was in 1984, when U.S.-Soviet relations were described by BAS as having “reached their iciest point in decades”.

Today’s polemic takes into account the immutable laws of science in relation to the “climate catastrophe” as well as the activities of modernisation of massive nuclear arsenals, which come with inadvertent risks.

“The question gets much more complicated than someone with their finger on the button,” said Kennette Benedict, executive director of BAS.

Another major problem is the world’s addiction to fossil fuels, said BAS.

Climate change and nuclear tensions were placed on equal footing for the 2015 warning.

“And while fossil-fuel burning technologies may seem like a less kind of abrupt way to ruin the world, they’re doing it in slow motion,” said Benedict.

Citizen’s potential

“Negotiators on the international treaty of climate change or any international treaty are working within the fairly narrow latitude afforded them by their governments. And the governments themselves are working within the latitudes afforded them by their constituencies,” said BAS member of the Science and Security Board Sivan Kartha, senior scientist with the Stockholm Environment Institute.

Real cooperation on the international front, he said, “will

rely on there being a demand for that, a mandate for that, from constituencies within countries,” also noting “today’s extremely daunting political opposition to climate action”.

President of the Global Security Institute Jonathan Granoft described a series of global existential challenges that could accelerate the arrival of doomsday, including the stability of the climate, the acidity of the oceans, and biodiversity, as well as widespread goals of strategic stability and the pursuit of dominance.

“Remember we are extinguishing species at up to one thousand times faster than what would be the normal evolutionary base rate,” he told IPS. “The backdrop of these challenges arising from science, technology, and social organisation is the immature relationship between states in their pursuit of security through the application of the threat or use of force. The most dangerous tool of the pursuit of security through force are the world’s nuclear arsenals.

“...On the other hand, a growing consensus within informed members of global governance and civil society is rapidly coming to understand that no nation can be secure in an insecure world. And the business community has rapidly integrated in such a fashion that they have demonstrated the capacity of cooperation, if driven by recognised self-interests,” he said.

“I am reminded that in the 17th Century, the world moved from the predominance of the city-state into the modern world of the nation state. Such a phenomena required national identity. National identity occurred largely because of national grammar and language, which rested on the technological innovations of the printing press.

“Today, the technology that will allow us to have global cultural grammar and identity is being provided by the Internet. And thus, the tools, to move from the dis-functionality of posing national interest against the global common good has the potential to be overcome.”

In light of his analysis, the clock’s minute hand can be influenced for the better or for the worse, and 2015 will present opportunities for progress to be made.

The simple truth

Alyn Ware is a member of the World Future Council and the coordinator of Global Wave 2015, an initiative on “Global Action to Wave Goodbye to Nukes”.

Ware spoke to IPS ahead of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

“The hundreds of billions of dollars that’s wasted on nuclear weapons is needed in order to shift our economy from a carbon-based economy to an economy based on renewable energy,” he told IPS, also explaining that “the competition and the confrontation and conflicts that are perpetuated by nuclear weapons prevent the type of cooperation that’s required for addressing climate change.

“The simple truth on nuclear weapons is that they are inconsistent with civilisation. Threatening to annihilate cities, innocent people, future generations, is not consistent with humanity,” Ware told IPS.

“And then there’s also a simple truth with climate change,” he added. “The simple truth is we have to move from a carbon-based economy to one that’s focused more on renewable energies.”

He also acknowledged the nuances surrounding the implementation of these simple truths.

“At the moment, we don’t have sufficient political commitment to either of them,” he said, addressing vested interests preventing that kind of action, including corporations making nuclear weapons or selling oil, coal or gas.

“What we’re looking at is empowering people,” he said.

For that reason, he thinks the Doomsday Clock is very good. “Because it’s simple, it’s really understandable, and it gives the idea that, hey, we can all be involved in this.”

23 January 2015  
Image credit: UN Photo-Yuichiro Sasaki.





# 2015 Crucial For A Nuclear Weapon Free World

By JAMSHED BARUAH

BERLIN (IDN) - 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and promises to be a crucial year for moving toward a world without nuclear weapons. While indications are that the global movement for banning the bomb is gaining strength, attempts to open a new chapter in nuclear arms race should not be underestimated, a close look at developments in 2014 shows.

A sign of growing awareness of the need to abolish atomic weapons is that 155 governments – more than 80 percent of the members of the United Nations – supported the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons tabled at the General Assembly in October 2014.

The view powerfully expressed in the Joint Statement, that it is “in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances,” expresses the deepening consensus of humankind, noted Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an indefatigable champion of a world without nuclear weapons.

Government representatives of 44 out of 158 states, which participated in the December 8-9 Vienna International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, said that as long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use by design, miscalculation or madness, technical or human error remains real.

States that expressed support for a ban treaty at the Vienna Conference include: Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Holy See, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Echoing worldwide sentiments, Pope Francis called in a message to the conference for nuclear weapons to be “banned once and for all”. In the message, delivered by Archbishop Silvano Maria Tomasi, Pope Francis told

nearly 1,000 participants representing 158 states and over 200 civil society organisations that:

“A world without nuclear weapons’ is a goal shared by all nations and echoed by world leaders, as well as the aspiration of millions of men and women. The future and the survival of the human family hinges on moving beyond this ideal and ensuring that it becomes a reality.”

The Vienna conference was the third after the Oslo (Norway) gathering in 2013 and Nayarit (Mexico) early 2014. Unlike the previous conferences, the United States and Britain – two of the five members of the nuclear club, along with France, Russia and China – participated. In addition, an unofficial representative from China attended the meeting. Two other nuclear-armed states, India and Pakistan, who took part in the previous two meetings, were also present in Vienna.

Responding to the call of 44 states for banning the bomb, Austria delivered the “Austrian pledge” in which it committed to work to “fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons” and pledged, “to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal”.

Kudos for Austria

As a gesture of praise for the Austrian pledge, the Washington-based Arms Control Association (ACA) designated Austria’s Director for Arms Control, Non-proliferation, and Disarmament Ambassador Alexander Kmentt as the 2014 “Arms Control Person of the Year”. The ACA announced on January 8 that Kmentt had received the highest number of votes in an online poll.

“Ambassador Kmentt deserves enormous credit for making the third conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons the most inclusive and extensive yet,” said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. “The Vienna conference has changed the international conversation about nuclear weapons and provided renewed urgency to the effort to move toward a world free of nuclear weapons,” he said.

“The majority of states parties to the NPT (Non-proliferation Treaty) will expect the upcoming Review Conference in May to take into account the findings and conclusions of the Vienna conference and prompt the world’s nuclear weapon states to make faster progress on

their NPT Article VI commitments,” added Kimball.

NPT, which entered into force in March 1970, seeks to inhibit the spread of nuclear weapons. Its 190 states-parties are classified in two categories: nuclear-weapon states (NWS) – consisting of the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom – and non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS). Under the treaty, the five NWS commit to pursue general and complete disarmament, while the NNWS agree to forgo developing or acquiring nuclear weapons.

Article VI commits the NWS to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

PNND Council member EU foreign minister

Another important development that boosted the movement for a nuclear weapon free world was the nomination of Italian Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, replacing Catherine Ashton.

Mogherini has played an active role in PNND (Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament). endorsing a number of PNND member-led initiatives including the Parliamentarians Declaration Supporting a Nuclear Weapons Convention and the Joint Parliamentary Statement for a Middle East Free from Nuclear Weapons and all other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

She has spoken at several PNND events and led initiatives in the Italian parliament including a resolution adopted unanimously in June 2009 supporting the UN Secretary-General’s Five Point Proposal for Nuclear Disarmament. (Read: Italian Parliament adopts disarmament resolution).

Mogherini has been a member of PNND since she first became a member of the Italian parliament in 2008, and has served on the PNND Council since 2010. She has also become a member of the European Leadership Network for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, and of the CTBT Group of Eminent Persons.

PNND has also worked with her husband Matteo Rebesani in his role as one of the organisers of the Nobel Peace Summits – in particular to build an active nuclear disarmament program for the Summits and for cooperation between Nobel Peace laureates on nuclear disarmament (Read: Parliamentarians and Nobel Laureates advance nuclear abolition).

‘Nuclear deterrence’

While these and similar development give cause for sanguine optimism that 2015 might turn out to be a milestone on the road to a nuke-free world, tensions in relations between the U.S. and Russia over Ukraine have triggered discussions about the continued relevance of ‘nuclear deterrence’. Supporters of this theory hold that nuclear weapons are intended to deter other states from attacking with their nuclear weapons, through the promise of retaliation and possibly mutually assured destruction (MAD).

‘Sputnik’ reported on December 17 that the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, still considers nuclear arsenals as a crucial factor of international security. Such destructive weapons must be prevented from falling into the hands of extremists at all costs, he said in an interview with RT TV channel.

“I do not agree with those who claim that nuclear threat is not a deterrent anymore. We are now far more aware of what nuclear weapons and nuclear power are [capable of],” Gorbachev reportedly said.

Gorbachev cited Russia’s R-36M (SS-18 Satan) intercontinental ballistic missile, which he said has an explosive force “of a hundred Chernobyls,” as an example of why nuclear weapons are still a crucial factor of international security. He stressed this kind of destructive weapons must be prevented from falling into the hands of extremists at all costs.

Earlier in December, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasised the importance of maintaining the country’s nuclear deterrence capability due to the growing number of security challenges.

As one of his final acts of 2014, on December 26, President Putin signed Russia’s new military doctrine. In principle, the doctrine, an official statement on national defence, is regularly updated and made public. Its previous iteration had been in place since February 2010.

Writing in the National Interest on December 31, Dmitri Trenin said: “In the run-up to the publication of the text, there were gloomy predictions. One suggested that the United States and its NATO allies would be formally designated Russia’s likely adversaries. Another one, based on the remarks of a senior serving general, expected Russia to adopt the notion of preventive nuclear strike. Neither of these provisions found its way into the published document. The doctrine does, however, faithfully reflect the sea change that occurred in Russia’s foreign policy and security and defence postures in 2014.”

Trenin argues that essentially, for Russian Commander-in-Chief Putin and for his generals, admirals and security officials, war in 2014 ceased to be a risk and turned into grim reality. Russia has had to use its military forces in Ukraine, arguably the most important neighbor it has in Europe. The conflict over Ukraine, in Moscow’s view, reflects the fundamental reality of an “intensification of global competition” and the “rivalry of value orientations and models of development.”

“There was a time when nuclear weapons were seen as the best way to prevent world war. Not anymore,” says an observer of the Vienna conference. “Supporters of disarmament – including the Red Cross, Pope Francis, and, believe it or not, Henry Kissinger – say that’s wrong” and that deterrence does not work in a multipolar world. Instead, the presence of nuclear weapons just creates an incentive for more proliferation, as small countries try to one-up their regional adversaries.

Addressing experts in Geneva on December 17, Robert Wood, the U.S. Special Representative to the Conference on Disarmament said: “Looking ahead, it remains the policy of the United States to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. And we are facing new challenges as we consider how to responsibly eliminate the last 15% of those weapons. As we move to smaller and smaller numbers, leading to zero globally, we must in turn become rigorously more and more confident and trusting that all are fulfilling their commitments.”

He added: “In considering future reductions, the United States believes that the focus must be on responsible measures that can be trusted and verified. We will learn from our past experience and continue to move ahead with each step building on the last. While there is no pre-de-

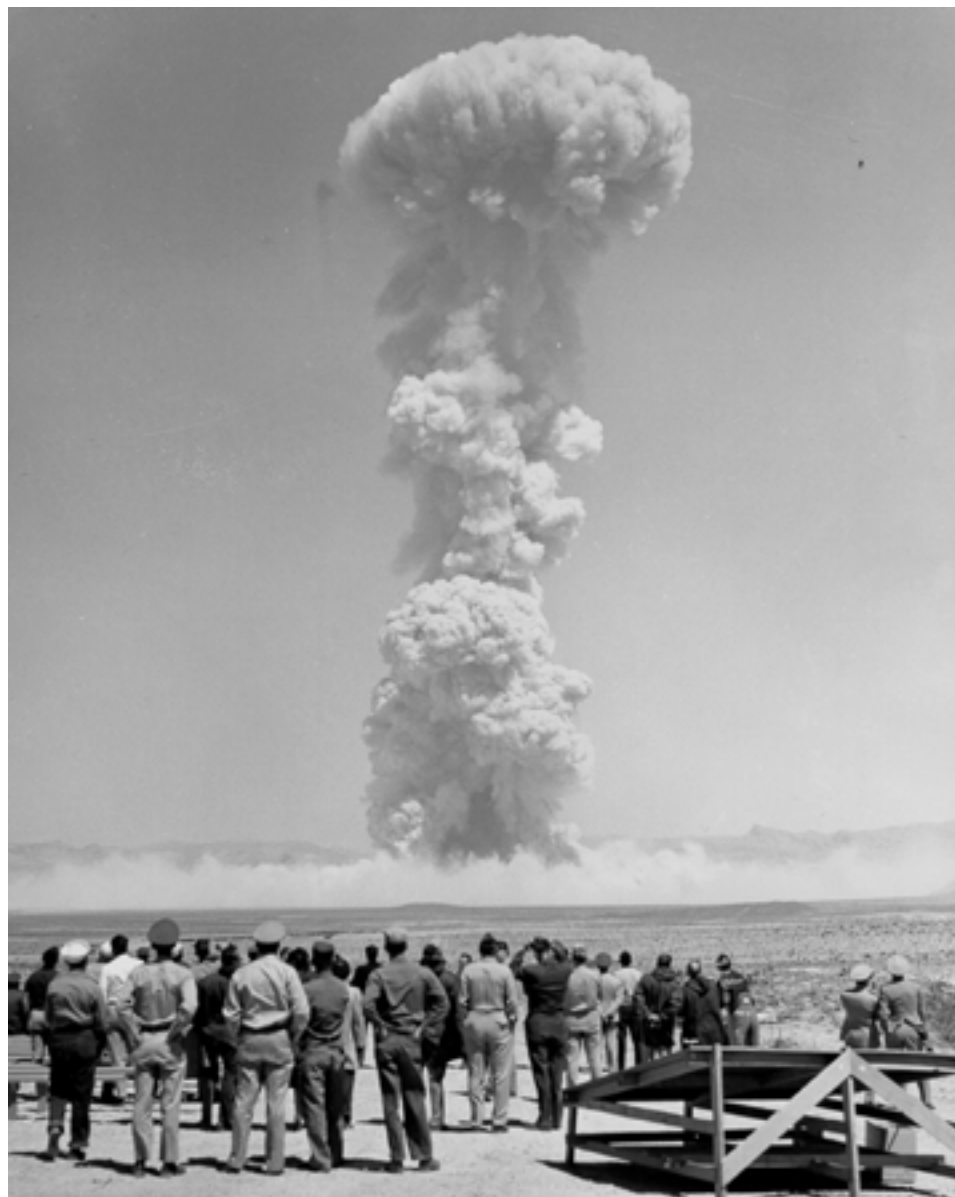


termined sequence of steps, and indeed we should pursue progress on multiple paths, there is no way to skip to the end and forgo the hard work of preparing for the technical and political disarmament challenges that lie ahead. Patience and persistence are needed from all NPT parties both among and beyond the P5 (USA, Russia, France, UK and China).”

9 January 2015

Image credit: Surgeonsmate Flickr CC BY-SA 3.0.





## 'Their Weapons Possess Them'

By XANTHE HALL

*"Possession does not prevent international disputes from occurring, but it makes conflicts more dangerous. Maintaining forces on alert does not provide safety, but it increases the likelihood of accidents. Upholding doctrines of nuclear deterrence does not counter proliferation, but it makes the weapons more desirable."* - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

BERLIN | VIENNA (IDN) - Nearly a thousand people crammed into the conference hall in the majestic Hofburg in Vienna for two full days of discussions on the unspeakable and unimaginable theme – the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. This was the third in a series of state-sponsored conferences taking place outside of the UN, the first two having taken place in Norway and Mexico.

The growing number of states taking part at these conferences is taken to be a sign of their effectiveness in both creating awareness about the unacceptable nature of nuclear weapons and building pressure for nuclear disarmament.

Nearly 160 states were represented, among them the United States and United Kingdom who were taking part for the first time, to the chagrin of Russia and France who resolutely continue to stay away. At the end of the conference, Austria pledged to work to close the "legal gap" that would lead to the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, inviting others to join them.

The Austrian Foreign Ministry pulled out all the stops for this conference. In the opening session, the young minister Sebastian Kurz called for a new momentum for concrete progress on global nuclear disarmament.

High level messages from the UN Secretary-General and the Pope set the tone. Pope Francis encouraged nuclear weapons' victims to be "prophetic voices" warning of the potential to destroy "us and and the civilisation".

A long list of prominent figures sent a letter to the Austrian Foreign Minister sharing the belief that the risks posed by nuclear weapons are underestimated and need to be reduced. The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross said that new studies confirmed their already-stated conclusion that there could be no adequate help or relief in case of a nuclear explosion.

Setsuko Thurlow related her personal story of loss and suffering as a Hibakusha (nuclear bomb survivor) and the whole room suffered with her.

"A is for atom, B is for bomb. C is for cancer, D is for death"

The opening session thereby introduced the main themes of the conference that were then covered in depth in the following sessions on the impact of nuclear weapons' explosions, nuclear testing, risks, and scenarios.

Scientific presentations were interspersed with testimonials from "downwinders" (victims of nuclear testing). Wheelchair-bound Michelle Thomas from "HEAL" in Utah gave an impassioned speech about growing up in the radioactive midst of over 100 above-ground nuclear tests and how her community became ravaged by cancer and other illnesses. She spoke of embarrassment at her mother's activism until she herself realised that it was not the Cold War enemy but "Our own country was bombing the hell out of us". People asked her if she was not afraid to speak out so strongly against the government. She replied: "they already killed me".

During the Q&A session following three testimonials from women on the destruction of their land, subsistence and health, the U.S. representative made a severe error of judgement. He made a speech, despite the Chair clearly telling states not to do so until the following day. The U.S. representative chose not to apologise to the Downwinders for their suffering, but to make it clear to all in the room that they were not planning on diverting from their "to-do" list of steps in order to increase momentum for nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear weapons are too cruel to tolerate

On the second day of the conference, a panel on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) concluded that the use of nuclear weapons would contravene existing IHL and environmental law, even though no specific ban is in place. A fascinating talk by Nobuo Hayashi of Oslo University delved into the ethical and moral dimensions and concluded that, like torture – which was on everyone's minds that day after the publication of the Senate report – nuclear weapons are "too cruel to tolerate". Now that "we no longer live in an era when humankind felt compelled to take itself hostage for its own survival" it is an opportune moment to relieve ourselves of this unnecessary suffering.

The political statement section took five hours to slog through, without a lunch break and for some of the time without translation. 100 states took the floor to share their thoughts and their conclusions. Now and again the tedium of the occasion was broken up by a civil society statement, most notably from the Wildfire's 'Chief Inflammatory Officer' Richard Lelanne who pleaded with the non-nuclear weapon states to stop whining and get on with banning nuclear weapons on their own.

The so-called "weasel states" (those under the nuclear "umbrella" of the U.S.) were greeted by a giant weasel that appeared in the foyer when they stepped out for some refreshments. Lelanne likened the nuclear-armed states to alcoholics, possessed by their weapons, and urged nuclear weapon-free states not to support their habit. The ICAN statement was presented by the young director of ICAN Austria Nadja Schmidt who called for a process "open to all and blockable by none" leading to a ban on nuclear weapons.

The humanitarian initiative aims to put the effects of nuclear weapons at the centre of the debate rather than national security interests and these conferences have been effective in achieving that for the large part.

Ukraine, however, was so caught up in its present conflict that it was unable to step outside its own box and indulged instead in a verbal attack on Russia.

The United Kingdom went as far as to say that the humanitarian effects were already clear in 1968 and that a ban or a timetable for elimination would endanger strategic stability, so that they planned to hang on to their missiles for "as long as necessary".

The "Austrian Pledge" was the main outcome of the conference – a tool that allows countries to signify their preparedness to begin a process leading to the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is unlikely that much more than this could be achieved before the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in Spring 2015. But unless there is an outcome from the conference in New York, which many hold to be unlikely, Austria may be able to use the support amassed through its Pledge to kick-start negotiations on a treaty, with or without the nuclear-armed states. Given that the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be commemorated for the 70th time in 2015, that might be an apt time for talks on a ban to begin.

*Xanthe Hall is Disarmament Campaigner of IPPNW Deutschland | IPPNW Germany.*

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Image credit: National Nuclear Security Administration / Nevada Site Office Public Domain.



# Survivors Aspire For A World Free Of Nuclear Weapons

By NEENA BHANDARI

SYDNEY (IDN) - Sue Coleman-Haseldine, a Ko-katha-Mula Indigenous woman, was about three years old when the United Kingdom began conducting Nuclear weapons tests in Australia's Monte Bello Islands, off the Western Australian coast, and Emu Field and Maralinga in South Australia.

The 12 major tests, conducted between 1952 and 1963, contaminated a huge area, including Koonibba, the place where Sue's family and larger community lived.

"There were Aboriginal people living in the region when the tests started. Many people died and became sick in the immediate test areas. The first atomic bomb called 'Totem 1' spread far and wide and there are stories about the 'black mist' it created which killed, blinded and made people very sick," says Sue, who remembers elders in the community telling her about the healthy life of hunting for wild game and collecting bush fruits prior to the tests.

"Older people in our community talked about the Nullarbor dust storms, but it was the fallout from the Maralinga tests. We weren't on ground zero, but the dust didn't stay in one place. It went wherever the winds took it. People were dying of cancer, something that was new to us," recalls Sue, who learnt about the radiation fallout while attending a meeting of the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (ANFA).

Aboriginal people formed ANFA, formerly the Alliance Against Uranium, in 1997. They were joined by some NGOs concerned about existing or proposed nuclear developments in Australia, particularly on Indigenous homelands.

For Aboriginal people, the land is the basis of their culture. Sue was devastated to learn that the bush foods were possibly contaminated. "It is our supermarket for food and our pharmacy for medicines, and looking after it is our religion. It doesn't matter if you are Aboriginal or not, everyone in this part of the country has a sad story about premature sickness and death in their families. Cancer is the big one, but it is also common for people to suffer from thyroid conditions," she tells IDN.

Fertility problems, still births, birth defects became more common at the time of the testing, but even today people like Sue wonder if their health issues are related to the ongoing radiation in the area or genetic changes passed down through generations. She wants nuclear weapons permanently banned and the uranium that can create them left in the ground.

In 2013, governments, United Nations agencies and civil society members met in Oslo (Norway) for the first ever Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. This was followed with the Mexican Government hosting 146 countries in February 2014 to build on the evidence. In October 2014, 155 out of 193 member state governments supported the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons presented to the UN General Assembly. The Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Vienna (Austria) on December 8-9, heard Sue's shattering testimony.

The momentum to begin negotiations on a binding international treaty to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons has grown manifold, according to observers. There has been a renewed global effort especially to raise awareness of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and to ensure that they are never used again.

Today, estimated 17,000 warheads remain in existence, despite a significant decrease in the stockpiles of the United States and the Russian nuclear warheads since the end of the Cold War.

Australia Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Tim Wright said, "It's time for Australia to join the overwhelming majority of nations that have pledged their support for a treaty banning nuclear weapons."

ICAN Australia has created a Youtube video 'Don't Want Your Nuclear Umbrella' to drive home the message for all "umbrella states" to stop tolerating the bomb and reject nuclear weapons in their defence policy. The video has attracted almost 16,000 hits. "We wanted to open a discussion about extended nuclear deterrence in a comical and accessible way, especially for young people

who haven't experienced the Cold War," Gem Romuld, Outreach Coordinator at ICAN Australia, told IDN.

80 percent Australians favour ban nukes treaty

A recent Red Cross survey has found that 8 out of 10 Australians support a legally binding treaty to ban the use of nuclear weapons. As many as 88 per cent said there would be no winners in a nuclear war given the devastating humanitarian consequences that would result.

The International Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement has consistently voiced its deep humanitarian concerns about nuclear weapons, since they were first used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are not limited to space and time. Radiation affects health, agriculture and natural resources over a wide area and for generations to come.

Rosemary Lester, who was born in Adelaide (South Australia) in 1970, recalls how one day her father, who was in bed sick, was listening to Sir Ernest Titterton (nuclear physicist) being interviewed about Maralinga on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Radio.

"I remember hearing dad swear out aloud. I went into the room and asked him what was wrong. He said it was something that had happened a long time ago before I was born. In fact, when he was a boy. It was when I first heard of Maralinga atomic testing", Rosemary, Director on the Alinytjara Wilurara (North West) Natural Resource Management Board, told IDN.

She has had firsthand experience of her father, both her grandparents and other family members suffering from ailments as a consequence of the nuclear tests. She herself was diagnosed with a rare auto-immune disease called Scleroderma in 2005.

"There was no awareness then about Uranium mining and its damage to the environment and what it was being used for. I now understand why my dad and my grandparents became strong advocates and felt the need to actively protest, speak, educate and advocate against the Nuclear Industry and protect "nganampa nguru" (our country)", said Rosemary, who wants oral histories of the

time recorded and provided in both English and Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara languages for future generations.

In 1984, the Australian Government established the Maralinga Royal Commission to probe the nuclear tests in response to growing community concern regarding measures being taken to protect people from the exposure to radiation, and the disposal of radioactive substances and toxic materials.

"The secret files did not become available until 2003, 50 years after the Atomic tests. It is well known that Plutonium 239 remains openly exposed in that region. The poison is in the soil, dust blows in all directions and people are breathing it in. Even that bush tucker you eat is contaminated", says Rosemary, who is appalled that some people are saying that despite the contamination, the area is safe and want to promote it for tourism.

The responsibility for cleaning up the former test site rests with the Federal Government. Nuclear engineer and former Government supervisor of the Maralinga clean-up, Allan Parkinson, told the ABC that contamination remains widespread.

"There's over 100 square kilometers that is still contaminated above the clean-up criteria . . . Its plutonium 239 and in 24,000 years' time half of it will still be there," Parkinson told the ABC in June 2014.

Take responsibility

Rosemary wants authorities to take responsibility for the severe impact of the legacy of the nuclear testing. "Many people died immediately, but others are living with chronic health issues, cancers and disabilities. Not to mention depression, the painful loss and trauma suffered mentally, the psychological and social damage, and watching loved ones' lives diminish. It has eroded our culture and further marginalised our people", she said.

Advocates for nuclear abolition want governments to acknowledge their role in this disaster and stop mining uranium. A recent ANFA meeting heard that around 40,000 rounds of depleted uranium weapons have been deployed in Australian military training exercises. It recognised the intergenerational health impacts from nuclear weapons



testing as well as the documented use and impacts of depleted uranium weapons.

"The Government must provide funding for research on the Environmental damage to the Atomic Zone and Fallout area; apologise to First Nations People (Aboriginals); compensate individuals that are affected; and review the Piling Trust to help those that are sick", Rosemary told IDN.

The Maralinga Piling Trust was set up to manage compensation monies granted by the Australian Government to the Maralinga and Spinifex Country Traditional Owners as a result of the loss of access to lands due to the

nuclear tests.

Observers are of the view that the Vienna Conference has given a fresh impetus to the survivors' fight for justice as they aspire for a future free of nuclear weapons.

*Neena Bhandari is a Sydney-based foreign correspondent, writing for international news agencies IPS-Inter Press Service and IDN-InDepthNews as well as other national and international publications.*

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Image Credit: Andy Mitchell CC 2.0.





## Faiths United Against Nuclear Weapons

By **JULIA RAINER**

VIENNA (IPS) - “Never was there a greater need than now for all the religions to combine, to pull their wisdom and to give the benefit of that combined, huge repository of wisdom to international law and to the world.”

The words are those of Christopher Weeramantry, former judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and its vice-president from 1997 to 2000, who was addressing a session on faiths united against nuclear weapons at the civil society forum organised by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) on Dec. 6 and 7 in the Austrian capital.

Weeramantry strongly criticised the argument of those who claim that nuclear weapons have saved the world from another world war in the last 50 years.

He pointed to the ever-present danger represented by these weapons and said that on many occasions it had been luck that had prevented catastrophic nuclear accidents or the breaking out of a devastating nuclear war.

Noting that nuclear weapons “offend every single principle of religion,” Weeramantry was joined on the panel by a number of different religious leaders, including Mustafa Ceric, Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and peace activist, as well as Akemi Bailey-Haynie, national women’s leader of the Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International-USA.

Although there often seems to be a gap between the positions of different faith communities concerning dif-

ferent issues, all panellists were very clear in pushing the moral imperative and declaring the similar values that are inherent to all religions.

According to Mustafa Ceric, it “is not the question of whether you believe, it is the question of whether we are going to wait and see the destruction of our planet.”

Ceric also stressed that the goals and values of humanity are defined by common moral and ethical standards and that the role of religious communities today is greater than ever. Faced with fear and mistrust in society, he said, they also have the responsibility to care for peace and security in the world.

Akemi Bailey-Haynie continued with an emotional statement from first-hand experience – her own mother was a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing in 1945. Akemi Bailey-Haynie, national women’s leader of the Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International-USA.

“When nuclear weapons are considered a deterrent or viable option in warfare, it seems from a mind-set that fundamentally denies that all people possess infinite potential. No one has the right to take away a precious life of another human being.”

For Bailey-Haynie, nuclear weapons serve no purpose other than mass destruction. They have devastating effects on human beings and the environment, and the possibility of nuclear accidents or potential terrorism cannot be ruled out, she said, adding that dialogue between people of different or opposing opinions is the beginning to achieve change regarding this issue.

“As a second generation survivor, I deeply feel the

sorrow, as well as the outrage, born of not being able to yet live in a time when the most inhumane of weapons, nuclear weapons, have been banned,” she concluded.

Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Laureate and former Anglican Bishop, sent a video message to participants to express his deep solidarity and support for ICAN’s civil society forum initiative.

He argued that the best way to honour the victims of the incidents in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to negotiate a total ban on nuclear weapons to ensure that nothing comparable could ever happen again.

Two of the session’s speakers, Ela Gandhi and Mustafa Ceric, also attended the Dec. 8-9 Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons.

There, Ela Gandhi delivered a speech in the spirit of her grandfather who, she said, would have joined the movement to abolish nuclear weapons if still alive.

As Gandhi had dedicated his life to teaching humanity that there is a non-violent way of dealing with conflict, he even condemned nuclear weapons himself in 1946 when he said: “The atom bomb mentality is immoral, unethical, addictive and only evil can come from it.”

Pointing out that the mere existence of nuclear weapons leads to similar armament of rival countries, Ela Gandhi warned that these nuclear arsenals could destroy a chance for future generations to survive and have a prosperous life.

The Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons was the scene of intense and often emotional discussions among official representatives from over 160

countries, victims and civil society participants. Notably, both the United States and the United Kingdom were officially represented for the first time at a conference where their nuclear arsenals were subject to debate and criticism.

Religion played an important role at the conference, where many lobbying groups had religious backgrounds, and the opening ceremony was addressed by Pope Francis.

“I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity, planted deep in the human heart, will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home,” said Pope Francis, expressing his hope that “a world without nuclear weapons is truly possible.”

In a statement on behalf of faith communities to the final session, Kimiaki Kawai, Program Director for Peace Affairs at Soka Gakkai International (SGI), said: “The elimination of nuclear weapons is not only a moral imperative; it is the ultimate measure of our worth as a species, as human beings.”

He said that “acceptance of the continued existence of nuclear weapons stifles our capacity to think more broadly and more compassionately about who we are as human beings, and what our potential is. Humanity must find alternative ways of dealing with conflict.”

December 10, 2014

(Edited by Phil Harris)

Image credit: Natesh Ramasamy CC BY 2.0.





## Nuclear States Face Barrage of Criticism in Vienna

By JAMSHED BARUAH

VIENNA (IPS) - Sarcastic laughter erupted when a civil society representative expressed his “admiration for the delegate of the United States, who with one insensitive, ill-timed, inappropriate and diplomatically inept intervention” had “managed to dispel the considerable goodwill

the U.S. had garnered by its decision to participate” in Vienna Conference on Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons.

The speaker was Richard Lennane, who prefers to call himself the “chief inflammatory officer” of Wildfire, a Geneva-based disarmament initiative. He was making a

statement at the final session of the Dec. 8-9 conference in the Austrian capital – the third after the Oslo (Norway) gathering in 2013 and Nayarit (Mexico) earlier in 2014.

“The consequences of any nuclear weapon use would be devastating, long-lasting, and unacceptable. Governments simply cannot listen to this evidence and hear

these human stories without acting.” -- Akira Kawasaki of Peaceboat

Unlike the previous conferences, the United States and Britain – two of the five members of the nuclear club, along with France, Russia and China – participated in the Vienna conference.

But Washington’s diplomatic jargon was far-removed from the highly emotional impact of statements by survivors of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and of nuclear testing in Australia, Kazakhstan, and the Marshall Islands. They gave powerful testimonies of the horrific effects of nuclear weapons. Their evidence complemented other presentations offering data and research.

Ambassador Adam Scheinman, special representative of the U.S. president for non-proliferation, assured that “underpinning all of our efforts, stretching back decades, has been our clear understanding of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use”.

This claim not only left a large number of participants unimpressed but also failed to give reason for hope that the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference in 2015 would bear fruit.

All the more so, because as the U.S.-based Arms Control Association, Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, Nuclear Information Project of the Federation of American Scientists, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Union of Concerned Scientists pointed out in a joint statement, “nearly five years after the successful 2010 NPT review conference, follow-through on the consensus action plan – particularly the 22 interrelated disarmament steps – has been very disappointing.

“Since the entry into force of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) in 2011,” the statement added, “Russia and the United States have failed to start talks to further reduce their still enormous nuclear stockpiles, which far exceed any plausible deterrence requirements.”

2015 will also mark the 70th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the consequences of which are still being felt by hibakusha (survi-

vors) and their families, as Setsuko Thurlow, Hiroshima Peace Ambassador and survivor of the atomic bombing explosion on Aug. 6, 1945, illustrated in an impassioned statement.

“The consequences of any nuclear weapon use would be devastating, long-lasting, and unacceptable. Governments simply cannot listen to this evidence and hear these human stories without acting,” said Akira Kawasaki, from the Japanese NGO Peaceboat.

“The only solution is to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons and we need to start now,” Kawasaki added.

U.S. ambassador Scheinman sought to reassure in a statement prepared for the general debate: “The United States fully understands the serious consequences of nuclear weapons use and gives the highest priority to avoiding their use. The United States stands with all those here who seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

“The United States has been and will continue to work to create the conditions for such a world with the aid of the various tools, treaties and agreements, including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty regime.”

Irrespective of the veracity of the U.S. claim, Scheinman’s dry and rather formulaic remarks stood in stark contrast to passionate pleas made by representatives of 44 out of 158 participating states, that as long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use by design, miscalculation or madness, technical or human error remains real.

States that expressed support for a ban treaty at the Vienna Conference include: Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Holy See, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Echoing worldwide sentiments, Pope Francis called in a message to the conference for nuclear weapons to be

“banned once and for all”.

In a message delivered by Angela Kane, High Representative of the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that the Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna initiatives had “brought humanitarian considerations to the forefront of nuclear disarmament. It has energised civil society and governments alike. It has compelled us to keep in mind the horrific consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons.”

Questioning the rationale behind nuclear weapons, Ban – who is known to be committed to nuclear disarmament – said that keeping the horrific consequences of nukes in mind was essential in confronting those who view nuclear weapons as a rational response to growing international tensions or as a symbol of national prestige.

In his widely noted message, he criticised “the senselessness of pouring funds into modernising the means for our mutual destruction while we are failing to meet the challenges posed by poverty, climate change, extremism and the destabilising accumulation of conventional arms.”

In “the 70th year of the nuclear age”, Ban said “possession of nuclear weapons does not prevent international disputes from occurring, but it makes conflicts more dangerous”.

Besides, he added, maintaining forces on alert does not provide safety, but it increases the likelihood of accidents. Upholding doctrines of nuclear deterrence does not counter proliferation, but it makes the weapons more desirable.

Growing ranks of nuclear armed-states do not ensure global stability, but instead undermine it – a view with which also faith organisations gathered in Vienna agreed.

10 December 2014

Image credit: United States Department of State Public Domain





## U.N. Urged to Ban Nuke Strikes Against Cities

By **ROGER HAMILTON-MARTIN**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - Civil society groups are urging the U.N. General Assembly to pass a resolution declaring nuclear strikes on cities to be a clear-cut violation of international humanitarian law.

At the Dec. 8-9 Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, supporters of the proposed resolution argued that after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is undeniable that the explosion of a nuclear weapon on a populated area would engender destruction beyond

acceptable human limits.

“There are over 6,000 cities already members of our campaign called Cities Are Not Targets! declaring it illegal to target cities with nuclear weapons,” said Aaron Tovish, campaign director for Mayors for Peace.

“This initiative to have the bodies of the United Nations explicitly outlaw such conduct is of great value,” he said.

Proponents argue that just raising the issue would bring a dose of reality into the debate about the threat of nuclear weapons, and that a GA resolution calling on the Security Council to affirm the illegality of using nuclear weapons on populated areas under international humanitarian law (IHL) could be a real, practical step to advance nuclear disarmament.

Jonathan Granoff, head of the Global Security Institute, said that other uses also violate international law but there should be no question that destroying a city is illegal.

Granoff told IPS, “Pending obtaining a legal ban, a convention, or a framework of instruments leading to nuclear disarmament, which is required by the promises made by the nuclear weapons states under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the unanimous ruling of the International Court of Justice, this step would make us all a bit safer and downgrade the political status of these horrible devices.”

### Is a resolution necessary?

In recent years, it has become apparent that failure to fulfill promised progress on nuclear disarmament has been caused by deeply entrenched security policies that do not seem likely to change.

U.S. President Barack Obama and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have raised hopes of further nuclear disarmament, yet this has flown in the face of a reality in which nuclear weapons states continue to either modernise or expand their arsenals, or do both.

Nuclear states agree that the warheads are bad (often recognising a legal responsibility to disarm), yet critics note that in an act of impressive cognitive dissonance, these states simultaneously advance that they are good because they are necessary for deterrence purposes and strategic stability, the disturbance of which could be bad.

Thus, while they exist, so these states say, it is good to rely on them.

China, Russia, the UK, U.S. and France have agreed they have a legal responsibility to disarm, based on the

Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970.

India has called for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on a universal, nondiscriminatory, treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons and Pakistan has said it would join such a process. Israel has said nothing.

In 2000, 13 steps were agreed upon to move towards disarmament – and then in 2010, 64 additional commitments were made by 188 states.

Yet despite the non-realisation of these incremental moves towards disarmament, the nuclear weapons states maintain that any other attempt to delegitimise, ban, and eliminate the warheads is a distraction.

Proponents of the resolution like Granoff see it as a step forward towards extrication from the situation.

Granoff told IPS, “The maximalist demand of a complete ban on weapons, and the ‘incremental steps’ towards disarmament are both jammed. Will advancing IHL help both of these processes? Will it provide impetus to get a ban on testing, fissile materials, and more cuts of arsenals?”

### Criticism of the proposal

The proposal is likely to face robust criticism from nuclear weapons states and those under the “umbrella of deterrence” (those states allied to a nuclear power that claim to be protected by affiliation).

Speaking to IPS, former deputy judge advocate general, U.S. Air Force Major General Charles Dunlap Jr. expressed reservations about the advancement of such a resolution.

Dunlap remains unconvinced on the question of whether there is an authoritative prohibition on the use of nuclear weapons in IHL, saying, “It sounds as if Mr. Granoff assumes that IHL applicable to the use of conventional weapons would automatically apply to the use of nuclear weapons. This is incorrect.

“In fact, even some of the countries which are parties (as the U.S. and some other nuclear powers are not) to Additional Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions (which contains targeting rules) made an express reservation to it to the effect that it did not govern the use of nuclear

weapons.”

These legal arguments are hotly contested, however. Proponents of the resolution point to the final document from the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference of 2010 which “reaffirms the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.”

Those in support of the proposal seem undeterred. Alyn Ware of the World Future Council told IPS, “I think it’s a good proposal. I don’t think it’s the only path. The idea of ‘non-first use’ also has traction.”

Ware stands in opposition to Dunlap, saying “A nuclear weapon has a much larger blast impact than conventional weapons. The blast impact can’t be contained to a specific military target.

“If it’s far away from populated areas, then maybe it will not violate IHL, but there would still be enormous problems with fall out and controlling its trajectory... but you can’t even make the argument when it’s in a populated area.”

IPS spoke to former Senior Political Affairs Officer in the Office of Ms. Angela Kane, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations, Randy Rydell, who said, “The nuclear powers will almost certainly try to deal with this humanitarian campaign by diverting it onto the track of “arms control” — namely, we need to improve the safety and security of nukes and “keep them out of the wrong hands”.

Both arguments divert attention from the risks inherent in such weapons, in anybody’s “hands”.

10 December 2014

Image: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (centre) speaks at the Seventh Ministerial Meeting of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), held on the margins of the General Assembly general debate in September 2014. Image credit: UN Photo/Evan Schneider



## Civil Society Support for Marshall Islands Against Nukes

By JULIA RAINER

VIENNA (IPS) - Ahead of the Dec. 8-9 Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, activists from all over the world came together in the Austrian capital to participate in a civil society forum organised by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) on Dec. 6 and 7.

One pressing issue discussed was the Marshall Islands' lawsuit against the United States and eight other nuclear-weapon nations that was filed at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in April 2014, denouncing the over 60 nuclear tests that were conducted on the small island state's territory between 1946 and 1958.

The location was chosen not only because it was an isolated part of the world but also because at the time it was also a Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands governed by the United States. Self-government was achieved in 1979, and full sovereignty in 1986.

The people of the Marshall Islands were neither informed nor asked for their consent and for a long period did not realise the harm that the testing would bring to the local communities.

The consequences were severe, ranging from displacement of people to islands that were strongly radiated and cannot be resettled for thousands of years, besides birth abnormalities and cancer. The states responsible denied the harm of the practice and refuse to provide for adequate amount of health care.

Castle Bravo was the code name given to the first United States' test of a nuclear bomb in 1954 and was 1000 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

Addressing the ICAN forum, Marshall Islands Foreign Minister Tony de Brum explained that his country had decided to approach the ICJ to take a stand for a world free of nuclear weapons.

De Brum said that the Marshall Islands was not seeking compensation, because the United States had already provided millions of dollars to the islands, but wants to hold states accountable for their actions in violating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and international customary law.

The NPT, which entered into force in 1970, commits nuclear-weapon states to nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear power. The nine countries currently holding nuclear arsenals are the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel.

Although a certain degree of disarmament has been taken place since the end of the Cold War, these nine nations together still possess some 17,000 nuclear weapons and globally spend 100 billion dollars a year on nuclear forces.

The Marshall Islands case, which has received worldwide attention and support from many different organisations, is often referred to as "David vs. Goliath". One eminent supporter is the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF), whose president, David Krieger, said: "The Marshall Islands is a small, gutsy country. It is not a country that will be bullied, nor is it one that will give up."

"It knows what is at stake with nuclear weapons," he continued, "and is fighting in the courtroom for humanity's survival. The people of the Marshall Islands deserve our support and appreciation for taking this fight into the U.S. Federal Court and to the International Court of Justice, the highest court in the world."

Another strong supporter of the case is Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist organisation that advocates for peace, culture and education and has a network of 12 million people all over the world. The youth movement of SGI even launched a "Nuclear Zero" petition and obtained five million signatures throughout Japan in its demand for a world free of nuclear weapons.

The campaign was encouraged by the upcoming 70th

anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2015 as well as the holding of the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

Addressing the ICAN, de Brum urged participants to support the cause of the Marshall Islands. "For a long time," he said, "the Marshallese people did not have a voice strong enough or loud enough for the world to hear what happened to them and they desperately don't want it to happen to anyone else."

He went on to say that when the opportunity arose to file a lawsuit in order to stop "the madness of nuclear weapons", the Marshall Islands decided to take that step, declaring in its lawsuit: "If not us, who? If not now, when?"

De Brum recognised that many had discouraged his country from taking that step because it would look ridiculous or did not make sense for a nation of 70,000 people to take on the most powerful nations in the world on such a highly debated issue.

However, he said, "there is not a single citizen on the Marshall Islands that has not had an encounter with one or another effect of the testing period ... because we have experienced directly the effects of nuclear weapons we felt that we had the mandate to do what we have done."

The Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons is the third in a series of such conferences – the first was held in Oslo, Norway, in March 2013 and the second in Nayarit, Mexico, in February 2014.

9 December 2014

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# Nuclear-Weapon Free Northeast Asia Is Possible

By JAMSHED BARUAH

GENEVA (IDN) - While existing tensions in Northeast Asia continue to be a source of concern and urgent action is required to diffuse these and bring about meaningful cooperation, a nuclear-weapon free zone (NWFZ) in the region is possible and should in fact be a priority, according to an international conference held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on November 26.

Mongolia's single-state NWFZ is a strong illustration of leadership in this area, and should serve as an example to other states wishing to take action against nuclear weapons and the dangers they pose, final document of the international Conference 'Dimensions to create a Nuclear-Weapon Free Northeast Asia' stated.

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Northeast Asia and Blue Banner, Ulaanbaatar Focal Point of GPPAC, organised the conference under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Economic Development of Mongolia.

Over 60 people, including civil society representatives and scholars from Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Kyoto, Pyongyang, Seoul, Taipei, Tokyo, Ulaanbaatar and Vladivostok, as well as representatives of the GPPAC Global Secretariat in The Hague, attended the conference.

The conference considered "Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status and the role that the country could play in promoting greater confidence, stability and non-proliferation in the region". It reaffirmed the participants' commitment to conflict prevention, peace-building and non-proliferation in the region, as reflected in the previous statements of GPPAC Northeast Asia in the 2005 Tokyo Agenda, the 2006 Mt Kumgang Action Plan, and the 2007 and 2010 Ulaanbaatar statements.

The participants were of the view that addressing issues of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons detonation, accidental or intentional, was an important and timely measure that would allow the international community to maintain high awareness of the urgency of nuclear disarmament by deepening the understanding of the devastating consequences of nuclear detonation.

Hence they welcomed the holding of two conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in Oslo, Norway in 2013 and in Nayarit, Mexico in 2014, and the civil society involvement therein.

The Oslo conference addressed the consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation through a humanitarian lens, while the Nayarit conference allowed a deeper understanding of such consequences focusing on long-term effects as well as effects on public health, environment, climate change, food security, displacements and development.

They said that they expected third conference, to be held in Vienna on December 8 and 9, to highlight further the urgency of abolishing nuclear weapons by hearing further testimonies, looking at consequences of nuclear weapon tests, and the risks of human and technical error and would contribute to starting negotiations aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons.

Therefore they called upon civil society organisations to take an active part in both the governmental conference and the civil society forum being organised by ICAN (International Campaign for Abolition of Nuclear Weapons) on December 6 and 7 in Vienna.

Complete abolition of nuclear weapons

Participants reaffirmed their conviction that the only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons was their complete prohibition and elimination through conclusion of international legally binding instrument to this effect.

In view of this, they rejected modernisation of existing nuclear weapons and development of new types of such weapons as acts inconsistent with the goals and obligations of nuclear disarmament.

They welcomed the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations to designate September 26 as International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, the convening in 2013 of a high level meeting on nuclear disarmament and its outcome, and called upon states to convene the second meeting not later than 2018 so as to identify concrete measures and actions to eliminate nucle-

ar weapons in the shortest possible time.

In the interim, they called on the international community to commence negotiations and adopt without delay a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances. The conference also expressed its support for the Republic of the Marshall Islands' Nuclear Zero lawsuits, holding the nine nuclear-armed nations accountable for failing to comply with their obligations under the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

2015 NPT Review Conference

The participants discussed at length the preparations for the 2015 NPT Review, which was the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. They called upon nuclear-weapon states to fully comply with their obligations to nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT, and fully implement the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference as well as the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference, in particular Action 5.

The conference reaffirmed the important role that NWFZs play in strengthening regional and international security, and expressed support for strengthening the existing ones. In that respect it expressed concern that despite the agreements reached by the states parties to the NPT in 1995, 2000 and 2010, the international conference on the establishment of a Middle East NWFZ had not been held and expressed the hope that such a conference would be held before the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

According to the final document, the participants expressed concern over the persisting tensions in the Northeast Asian (NEA) region, including on and around the Korean peninsula. They believed that the Six Party Talks (involving South Korea and North Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the U.S.) still could play an important role in addressing some of their causes, and that other forms of dialogue to contribute to a permanent peace regime be sincerely pursued.

"The participants believed that confidence-building measures to improve relations and a broad approach to addressing this issue, including the feasibility of establish-



ing a NEA-NWFZ, were practically useful, and that the nuclear umbrella and extended nuclear deterrence needed to be given up altogether."

The conference welcomed the Mongolian President's proposal to promote the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security as an effective way to reduce mistrust and promote mutual understanding and greater confidence.

It expressed the view that civil society needed to play its role in promoting understanding and dialogue in the region and reiterated their commitment to continue cooperation of civil society organisations with a view to developing and strengthening a shared vision for a peaceful and stable Northeast Asia, as the Ulaanbaatar Process proposed by GPPAC Northeast Asia in 2007 and currently

in preparation.

The potential agenda for future dialogue sessions was to focus not only on traditional peace and security issues, but also include more comprehensive aspects such as economy, the environment, sustainability, disaster relief, gender, human security and the potential role of civil society.

The participants welcomed Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free zone policy both as a concrete contribution to regional stability, and as an innovative approach to addressing nuclear threat-related issues. They welcomed the joint declaration of the five nuclear-weapon states whereby the latter pledged to respect Mongolia's status and not to contribute to any act that would violate it. The participants

expressed the hope that Mongolia's example would be an inspiring example in addressing similar cases.

Further: The participants reaffirmed their support for global efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and conflict prevention in which civil society could play an important role. They, therefore, supported various civil society led campaigns and efforts such as the ICAN, Mayors for Peace, the various national and international campaigns to end the Korean War, and those to protect and promote Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

27 November 2014

Image credit: Nick Farnhill CC BY SA 2.0



# Why Nuclear Disarmament Could Still Be the Most Important Thing There Is

By RISTO ISOMAKI

In this column, Risto Isomäki, Finnish environmental activist and award-winning writer whose novels have been translated into several languages, describes the practically unimaginable capacity for destruction inherent in the nuclear facilities that currently exist around the world and argues that we have to try the impossible – force nuclear technologies back into the Pandora's box from which they came.

HELSINKI (IPS) - At the height of the Cold War the world's total arsenal of nuclear weapons, counted as explosive potential, may have amounted to three million Hiroshima bombs. The United States alone possessed 1.6 million Hiroshimas' worth of destructive capacity.

Since then, much of this arsenal has been dismantled and the uranium in thousands of nuclear bombs has been converted to nuclear power plant fuel.

Future historians are likely to offer some stingy comments on how 20th century governments first used thousands of billions of dollars to laboriously enrich natural uranium to weapons grade uranium with gas centrifuges, and then reversed the process, diluting their weapons grade uranium with natural uranium.

This declining trend has led many people and governments to believe that nuclear disarmament is no longer an important issue.

It is true that the probability of a nuclear war is currently immensely smaller than during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 or during the other hair-raisingly dangerous moments of the Cold War.

In spite of this, it could be a grave mistake to assume that the danger is now over, forever.

We have not really been able to push the evil genie back into the bottle, yet. The remaining U.S. and Russian inventories might still amount to 80,000 Hiroshima bombs. This is approximately forty times less than at the height of Cold War's nuclear armament race, but still much more than enough to destroy the world as we know it.

While the world's nuclear arsenal has become smaller,

the remaining nuclear weapons are more accurate and on average smaller than before. This might, some day, lower the threshold for using them.

Besides, it now seems that we have seriously underestimated the destructive capacity of all kinds of nuclear weapons.

In both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear bombs ignited large firestorms that burned all the people caught inside the fire perimeter to death. However, U.S. military scientists regarded fire damage as so unpredictable that for fifty years they concentrated only on analysing the impact of the blasts.

The story has been beautifully documented by Lynn Eden, a researcher at Stanford University, in an important book entitled *Whole World on Fire: Organisations, Knowledge & Nuclear Weapons Devastation*.

When, in 2002, the United States was afraid of a nuclear war between Pakistan and India, it warned their governments that a nuclear war in South Asia might kill twelve million people.

The figure was absurdly low because it only took the impact of the nuclear blasts into consideration. According to recent research, the fire damage radii of nuclear detonations are from two to five times longer than those determined by the blast effects. In practice, this means that the area destroyed by the fire is typically 4 to 25 times larger than the area shattered by the blast.

The Second World War firestorms in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Hamburg and Dresden caused very strong rising air currents and hurricane-speed winds blowing towards the fire from the edges of the fire perimeter.

Nuclear detonations in modern cities created even fiercer firestorms because they contain very large quantities of hydrocarbons in the form of asphalt, plastic, oil, gasoline and gas.

According to one study, the firestorm ignited by even a small, Hiroshima-size explosion in Manhattan would produce incredibly strong super-hurricane winds blowing towards the fire at the speed of 600 kilometres per hour.

Most skyscrapers have been designed to withstand wind speeds amounting to 230 or 250 kilometres per hour.

The worst-case scenario is a nuclear detonation happening far above the ground. According to the so-called 'Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Attack' – or EMP Commission for short – of the U.S. Congress, between 70 and 90 percent of the country's population might die within one year if somebody detonated a megaton-sized nuclear weapon at the height of 160 kilometres above the continental United States.

A nuclear explosion always produces a very strong electromagnetic pulse – or, to be more precise, three different electromagnetic pulses, which can fry all unprotected electronic equipment within a line of sight. From the height of 160 kilometres, everything in the continental United States is within a line of sight. Everything works with electricity and practically nothing has been protected against an EMP.

In other words, a single nuclear weapon could wipe out health care, water supplies, waste-water treatment facilities, agricultural production and the factories and laboratories making pharmaceuticals, vaccines and fertilisers – among many others.

Europe is equally vulnerable and most other countries, including India and China, are doing their utmost to become as vulnerable as the old industrialised countries already are.

According to the EMP Commission, the cost of electronic equipment would only rise by 3-10 percent if it were hardened against an electromagnetic pulse, and protecting the key 10 percent of everything with electronics would be enough to secure the crucial functions of an organised society. However, in practice, nothing like this has been done, in any country.

We should not forget nuclear disarmament, because it could still be the most important thing there is.

It would probably be wise to utilise the periods of relative calm as efficiently as possible for further reducing



our nuclear weapons arsenals and for developing better alternatives for nuclear electricity. Otherwise, tensions between declining and rising great powers may one day again create new nuclear armament races, with potentially disastrous consequences.

The spread of nuclear reactors increases the risks. Every country that acquires the ability to construct a nuclear reactor also acquires the ability to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Nuclear reactors were originally developed for making better raw material for nuclear weapons, and all our

reactors are still making plutonium, every second they operate.

The weapons grade uranium used in nuclear bombs is enriched by the same gas centrifuges that produce the fuel for our power-producing nuclear stations.

The stakes will rise higher if we also begin to construct fourth-generation nuclear power plants or breeder reactors. Breeders need, in one or more parts of the reactor, nuclear fuel in which the percentage of the easily fissile isotopes has been enriched to 15, 20 or 60 percent, or to even higher levels. This kind of fuel can already be used

for making crude nuclear weapons, without any further enrichment.

It is often said that when a technology has been developed it can no longer be forced back into the Pandora's box from which it came. However, when it comes to nuclear technologies, we just have to try. The long-term survival of our species may depend on this choice.

26 November 2014

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## Humanitarian Impact of Nukes Calls For Concerted Action

By **DAISAKU IKEDA**

TOKYO (IPS | IDN) - As we approach the 70th anniversary in 2015 of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are growing calls to place the humanitarian consequences of their use at the heart of deliberations about nuclear weapons.

The Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons presented to the U.N. General Assembly in October was supported by 155 governments, more than 80 percent of all member states.

The view powerfully expressed in the Joint Statement, that it is “in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances,” expresses the deepening consensus of humankind.

The Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons will be held in Vienna on Dec. 8-9. This conference and its deliberations should provide further impetus to efforts to end the era of nuclear weapons, an era in which these apocalyptic weapons have been seen as the linchpin of national security for a number of states.

This can only happen when the goal of a nuclear-free world is taken up as the shared global enterprise of humanity with the full engagement of civil society.

Within the agenda of the Vienna Conference, there are two items in particular that require us to adopt the perspective of a shared global enterprise.

The first is the examination of risk drivers for the inadvertent or unpredicted use of nuclear weapons due to human error, technical fault or cyber security.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, people were transfixed in horror as the world teetered on the edge of full-scale nuclear war. It took the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union 13 days of desperate effort to defuse the crisis.

Today, if a missile carrying a nuclear warhead were to be accidentally launched, there could be as little as 13 minutes before it reached its target. Escape or evacuation would be impossible, and

the targeted city and its inhabitants would be devastated.

Further, if such an inadvertent use of a nuclear weapon were met with retaliation of even the most limited form, the impact on the global climate and ecology would result in a “nuclear famine” that could affect as many as two billion people.

The use of a single nuclear weapon can obliterate and render meaningless generations of patient effort by human beings to create lives of happiness, to create societies rich with culture. It is in this unspeakable outrage, rather than in the numerical calculation of the destructive potential of nuclear weapons, that their inhuman nature is most starkly demonstrated.

The second agenda item that will bring into sharp focus the uniquely horrific nature of nuclear weapons—the aspect that makes them fundamentally different from other weapons—is the impact of nuclear weapons testing.

The citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not the only people to have directly experienced the horrendous effects of nuclear weapons. As the shared use of the term “hibakusha” indicates, large numbers of people continue to suffer from the consequences of the more than 2,000 nuclear weapons tests that have been carried out to date.

Further, communities near nuclear weapons development facilities in the nuclear-weapon states have experienced severe radiation contamination, and there are ongoing concerns about the health impacts on those who have worked in or lived near these facilities.

As these examples demonstrate, the decision to maintain nuclear weapons—even if they are not actually used—presents severe threats to people’s lives and dignity.

Annual global expenditures on nuclear weapons are said to total more than 100 billion dollars. If this enormous sum were to be directed not only at improving the lives of the citizens of the nuclear states, but at supporting countries where people continue to struggle against poverty

and inadequate healthcare services, the benefit to humankind would be immeasurable.

To continue allocating vast sums of money for the maintenance of a state’s nuclear posture runs clearly counter to the spirit of the UN Charter, which calls for the maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources—a call echoed in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Further, we must face squarely the inhumanity of perpetuating a distorted global order in which people whose lives could easily be improved are forced to continue living in dangerous and degrading conditions.

By taking up these two crucial themes, the Vienna Conference will place in sharp relief the underlying essence of the threat humankind imposes on itself by maintaining current nuclear postures—through the continuation of this “nuclear age.” At the same time, it will be an important opportunity to interrogate security arrangements that rely on nuclear weapons—and to do so from the perspective of the world’s citizens, each of whom is compelled to live in the shadow of this threat.

In 1957, in the midst of an accelerating nuclear arms race, second Soka Gakkai president and my personal mentor Josei Toda (1900–58) denounced nuclear weapons as a threat to people’s fundamental right to existence. He declared their use inadmissible—under any circumstance, without any exception.

The SGI’s efforts, in collaboration with various NGO partners, find their deepest roots in this declaration. By empowering people to understand and face the realities of nuclear weapons, we have sought to build a solidarity of global citizens dedicated to eliminating needless suffering from the face of the Earth.

The impassioned wish of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—and of all the world’s hibakusha—is that

no one else will have to suffer what they have endured. This determination finds resonant voice throughout civil society in support for the Joint Statement adopted by 155 of the world’s governments.

Even with governments whose understanding of their security needs prevents open support for the Joint Statement, there are real concerns about the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons.

I trust the Vienna Conference will serve to create an enlarged sphere of shared concern. This should then lead to the kind of shared action that will break the current stalemate surrounding nuclear weapons in the months leading up to the 70th anniversary of the world’s only uses of nuclear weapons in war.

21 November 2014

Daisaku Ikeda is a Japanese Buddhist philosopher and peace-builder and president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) grassroots Buddhist movement ([www.sgi.org](http://www.sgi.org)).

Image credit: Michael Oswald Public Domain.



## A Nuclear Weapon Free Zone for North-East Asia?



By JAYANTHA DHANAPALA

KANDY, Sri Lanka (IDN) - In 2015 it will be 70 years since the horrible bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the USA – the only time nuclear weapons were ever used. The urgent need to seek solutions over nuclear weapons in North-east Asia was highlighted in the following paragraphs from the Asia Pacific Leaders Network's (APLN) Jakarta Declaration of September 2014:

“Acutely conscious that the world's more than 16,000 remaining nuclear weapons are strongly concentrated in the Asia Pacific region, with the US and Russia having over 90 per cent of the world's stockpile and major strategic footprints here, China, India, and Pakistan all having significant arsenals, and the breakout state of North Korea continuing to build its capability, Noting further that most of the projected world growth

in civil nuclear energy – with all the proliferation, safety and security risks associated with such energy production unless it is closely and effectively regulated – will occur in the Asia Pacific.”

The Six-nation talks over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear programme has made little progress even as China's patience with that country wears thin. Tensions among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) continue over the bitter legacy of World War II and the disputes over the ownership of Islands in the East China and South China seas exacerbate them while the US hovers in the background.

Five nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZ), one single-state nuclear weapon free zone (Mongolia) and one unpopulated nuclear weapon free continent (Antarctica) – apart from the denuclearisation of the extremities of the seabed and ocean floor and outer space – have been legally established and exist in the world today. While they do not conform to a replicable model, the UN Disarmament Commission has established guidelines, which future proposals for NWFZ may wish to follow.

The proposal for a North East Asian NWFZ (NEANWFZ) has intrinsic merits but the first steps towards it in this tension-fraught region are still a long way off. The proposal has acquired a fresh relevance both as a solution to the nuclear weapon programme of the DPRK and as a safeguard against a possible nuclear weapon option being exercised by Japan and

the ROK. It could also assuage fears of a Chinese nuclear threat in East Asia with China accepting the protocols to a future NWFZ. The NEANWFZ is being seriously discussed among academics and legislators – perhaps a prelude to a negotiation at the policy making level.

Conceptually NWFZs represent 'affirmative action' on the part of non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) within

the Treaty for the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in accordance with its Article VII. There is strong opposition to nuclear weapons among non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS), actually predating the NPT, and the creation of NWFZs as building blocks for a nuclear weapon free world.

Indeed NWFZs in their preambles refer to global nuclear disarmament in unambiguous terms. As quarantine zones protecting countries and regions from the contagion of nuclear weapons, NWFZs are not all consistent in the set of prohibitions they have adopted. The Treaty of Rarotonga for the South Pacific NWFZ and the Treaty of Semipalatinsk for the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (CANWFZ), for example, include countries that have defence agreements with NWS and therefore enjoy extended nuclear deterrence.

In the case of Rarotonga the treaty permits the passage of nuclear armed vessels through the NWFZ and the harbours of its member states. These compromises on the principles of the prohibitions enshrined in the NWFZ treaties through adroit drafting were not seen to be in such fundamental conflict with the prohibitions as to vitiate the central thrust of the treaty. The 1999 UN Disarmament Commission guidelines for establishing NWFZs states, inter alia, that:

### UN Disarmament Commission guidelines

“States parties to a nuclear-weapon-free zone exercising their sovereign rights and without prejudice to the purposes and objectives of such a zone remain free to decide for themselves whether to allow visits by foreign ships and aircraft to their ports and airfields, transit of their airspace by foreign aircraft and navigation by foreign ships in or over their territorial sea, archipelagic waters or straits that are used for international navigation, while fully honouring the rights of innocent passage, archipelagic sea lane passage or transit passage in straits that are used for international navigation.”

All NWFZ treaties allow, at the sovereign discretion of each member state, for overflight and transit of nuclear armed vessels through international waters. The provisions of the Treaty of Bangkok also cover the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and continental shelves. However, it is disputed whether this is in accordance to the UN Law of the Sea Convention. Jozef Goldblat has noted in respect

of the CANWFZ that:

“This means that transit of nuclear weapons may be allowed or refused, but the decisions “should not be prejudicial” to the purposes and objectives of the treaty. Since neither the frequency nor the duration of transit is limited by the treaty, it is not clear to what extent transit differs from stationing. With the proviso mentioned above, total absence of nuclear weapons in the CANWFZ, as envisaged in Article VII of the NPT (dealing with the right of states to conclude regional denuclearisation treaties), cannot be guaranteed.

Introduction of nuclear weapons into the zone, even for a short time, would defeat the sought goal of regional denuclearisation. Moreover, transit of nuclear weapons allowed by one zonal state might affect the security of another.”

With regard to another aspect of a NWFZ treaty, more recently the agreed Australian decision to export uranium to India despite the latter not being within the NPT is widely seen as a violation of the Treaty of Rarotonga. Thus accepted NWFZ guidelines have been shown to be flexible.

In the case of all NWFZs however the provisions of the NPT apply since they are all states parties of this treaty. Thus the application of extended deterrence or sheltering under the nuclear umbrella offered by any one of the NWS must be seen as a violation of Article 1 – one of the core articles of the NPT.

Firstly the transfer of nuclear weapons or control of such weapons “directly or indirectly” is prohibited. This has been violated by the geographical location of US nuclear weapons in five NATO countries in Europe but has been justified by the US because the weapons are under US control – a justification frequently rejected by NNWS at NPT Review Conferences and other forums. No NWFZ would make the actual stationing of nuclear weapons whether under the control of a NWS or not legal.

Secondly, the prohibition “not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce” any NNWS to acquire or control nuclear weapons stands obviously violated when the protection of a nuclear weapon defence is agreed upon by a bilateral treaty with a NWS as in the case of Australia, Japan or ROK.

### ICJ ruling

The International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion of July 8, 1996 ruled unambiguously on nuclear deterrence and extended nuclear deterrence both of which contain a threat of the use of nuclear weapons. The case brought before the ICJ by the Marshall Islands against nine nuclear weapon armed states may very well clarify and expand on the 1996 ICJ Advisory Opinion when it is taken up in 2015.

Thus a NWFZ in North-east Asia has many reasons to commend itself as a solution to the complex issues in the region that threaten its security. However, compromising on fundamental NWFZ principles will only exacerbate matters. Exceptions and ambiguities have been introduced in the negotiation of past NWFZs but they cannot, and should not, be cited as precedents for future NWFZs. Extended deterrence and a NWFZ are mutually exclusive and so, as the DPRK nuclear programme is dismantled, the US nuclear umbrella, under which ROK and Japan have long been sheltered, must be folded in the interests of regional and global security.

The Obama speech in Prague in April 2009 and all that has transpired with regard to the objective of a nuclear weapon free world has altered global circumstances. Cold War warriors Schultz, Kissinger, Nunn and Perry said in their famous Wall Street Journal op-ed of 2007 that, “The end of the Cold War made the doctrine of mutual Soviet-American deterrence obsolete. Deterrence continues to be a relevant consideration for many states with regard to threats from other states. But reliance on nuclear weapons for this purpose is becoming increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective.”

The time to bury nuclear deterrence and extended nuclear deterrence is now. A NWFZ for North-east Asia guaranteed by the five nuclear weapon states in the NPT is the new security architecture needed for the region.

*Jayantha Dhanapala is a former UN Under-Secretary-General and a former Ambassador of Sri Lanka.*

4 November 2014

Image credit: David James Paquin US Army Public Domain.



## 2015 a Make-or-Break Year for Nuclear Disarmament



By **THALIF DEEN**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in September 2013 singled out what he described as “one of the greatest ironies of modern science”: while humans are searching for life on other planets, the world’s nuclear powers are retaining and modernising their weapons to destroy life on planet earth.

“We must counter the militarism that breeds the pursuit of such weaponry,” he warned.

With a slew of events lined up beginning in April, 2015 may be a make-or-break year for nuclear disarmament – either a streak of successes or an unmitigated failure.

The critically important Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which takes place every five years, is high up on the agenda and scheduled for April-May 2015.

Around the same time, there will be an international civil society conference on peace, justice and the environ-

ment (Apr. 24-25) in New York, and a major international rally and a people’s march to the United Nations (Apr. 26) by peace activists, along with non-violent protests in capitals around the world.

The year 2015 also commemorates the 70th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, stirring nuclear nightmares of a bygone era.

And it marks 45 years since the first five nuclear powers, the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia (P-5), agreed in Article VI of the NPT to undertake good faith negotiations for the elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Additionally, anti-nuclear activists are hoping the long postponed international conference on a nuclear-weapons-free-zone in the Middle East, agreed to at the Review Conference in 2010, will take place in 2015.

A network of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which will take the lead role in the events in 2015, will

also present a petition, with millions of signatures, calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The network calls itself ‘the International Planning Group for the 2015 NPT Review Mobilisation: For Abolition, Climate and Justice.’

The group includes Abolition 2000, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Earth Action, Mayors for Peace, Western States Legal Foundation, Japan Council against A&N Bombs,

Peace Boat, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, World Council of Churches, and many more.

Should the 2015 Review Conference fail to mandate the commencement of abolition negotiations, “the treaty itself could fail, accelerating nuclear weapons proliferation and increasing the likelihood of a catastrophic nuclear war,” warns the network.

Asked whether any progress could be achieved in the face of intransigence by the world’s nuclear powers, Dr. Joseph Gerson, co-convenor of the international network, replied, “But what are we supposed to do? Roll over and let the crackpot realists take us all to hell?”

“I don’t think so,” he said.

Certainly, prospects for the NPT Review are anything but rosy, warned Gerson, director of the peace and economic security programmes at the AFSC’s Northeast region.

“But among other things, having witnessed the debate during [the 2013] High Level Meeting (HLM) on Disarmament and the responses of governmental representatives during the Conference on the Human Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, I do take hope in knowing that our civil society movements are not alone in our struggle for abolition,” he added.

The international network says the last 2010 NPT Review Conference reaffirmed “the unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.”

Five more years have passed and another Review Conference is in the offing. Still, nuclear stockpiles of “civilisation-destroying” size persist, and even limited progress on disarmament has stalled.

Over 16,000 nuclear weapons remain, with 10,000 in military service and 1,800 on high alert, according to the network.

“All nuclear-armed states are modernising their nuclear arsenals, manifesting the intention to sustain them for decades to come,” it notes.

The network also says nuclear-armed countries spend over 100 billion dollars per year on nuclear weapons and related costs. Those expenditures are expected to increase

as nuclear weapon states modernise their warheads and delivery systems.

Spending on high-tech weapons not only deepens the reliance of some governments on their nuclear arsenals, but also furthers the growing divide between rich and poor.

In 2013, 1.75 trillion dollars was spent on militaries and armaments – more than the total annual income of the poorest third of the world’s population.

Jackie Cabasso of the Western States Legal Foundation and also a co-convenor of the international network said the nuclear powers have “refused to honour their legal and moral obligation to begin negotiations to ban and completely eliminate their nuclear arsenals”.

“As we have seen at the United Nations High-Level Meeting for Disarmament and at the Oslo and Nayarit Conferences on the Human Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, the overwhelming majority of the world’s governments demand the implementation of the NPT,” she said.

“We are working with partner organisations in the U.S. and other nations to mobilise international actions to bring popular pressure to bear on the 2015 Review Conference,” Cabasso said.

She said the 2015 mobilisation will highlight the inextricable connections between preparations for nuclear war, the environmental impacts of nuclear war and the nuclear fuel cycle, and military spending at the expense of meeting essential human needs.

Gerson told IPS, “In my lifetime, despite the stacked decks and long odds, I’ve seen and been privileged to play small roles in overcoming the Jim Crow apartheid system, the end of the Vietnam War, and the end of South African apartheid systems and dynamics that before they became history seemed at times almost insurmountable.

“I can still easily tap into the emotions of 1971 and 1972 during the Christmas bombings, when the world seemed so black as the bombs rained death on Vietnam despite our having done everything that we could imagine to do to end the war.”

In each of these cases, “unexpected developments and powerful human will brought the change for which we had sacrificed and struggled,” said Gerson, a member of the board of the International Peace Bureau and of the steering committee of the ‘No to NATO/No to War’

network.

He said the bleak scenario includes the reality that all of the nuclear weapons states are modernising their nuclear arsenals.

At the same time, there is collaboration among the P-5 in resisting the demands of the majority of the world’s nations to fulfill their Article VI commitments and a renewed era of confrontation spurred by NATO and European Union expansion and Russian President Vladimir Putin’s responses, including mutual nuclear threats.

Gerson said the dynamics in East Asia are reminiscent of those in Europe in the years leading to World War I – and all of these carry the threat of catastrophic war and annihilation.

“I know that the law of unintended consequences means that we can never truly know what the consequences of our actions will be,” he added. “That said I trust that our mobilisation will stiffen the moral backbones and give encouragement to a number of diplomats and governmental actors who are our potential allies.”

And hopefully, it will also provide the forums and opportunities for movement leaders and activists to think and plan together through mainstream and social media to revitalise popular understandings of the imperative of nuclear weapons abolition, he said.

At the same time, he is hoping the nuclear weapons abolition movement will expand for the longer term, including building alliances with climate change, economic and social justice movements.

“Through our work with students and young people, [we will] help generate the next generation of nuclear abolitionists, even as we race the clock against the dangers of nuclear war.”

9 October 2014

Picture: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reads a statement to the media after visiting Ground Zero of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site in April 2010.

Image credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.



## Waiting For Zero Nuke



By D RAVI KANTH

GENEVA (IDN) - The commemoration of the United Nations International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26 was a grim reminder of the continued threat from nuclear weapons to people at large.

“Around 2000 nuclear weapons are kept on alert between the United States and Russia which are now latched on to the [current] crisis in Syria and Ukraine,” says Aaron Tovish, a leading activist from the global Mayors for Peace campaign to eliminate nuclear warheads.

Just when Iraq and Syria are pounded from the skies with smart bombs, the surviving victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings point towards the deadly effects from the weapons of mass destruction on the civilians.

“We emphasize the importance of intensifying the global campaign for abolition of nuclear weapons and our major goal is to strengthen global momentum for achieving this goal by 2020,” Tovish told IDN.

As the United States plans to spend nearly a trillion dollars on modernising its nuclear arsenal in the next 30 years and Britain intending to spend 50 billion dollars on its Trident nuclear missile, the days of Cold War are back once again.

“We emphasize the dangers of from Syria, and Ukraine cannot serve as a justification for any of those expenditures on the nuclear weapons which pose a much bigger threat to climate change and food security,” Tovish argued.

Tovish who took part in the proceedings to mark the first anniversary of the UN day to eliminate nuclear weapons in Geneva explained about “I was her age” project launched by Mayors for Peace and Peace Boat to get the “Hibakusha” out to the world in the lead up to the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings in 2015.

Hibakusha are the living victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The U.S. President Harry S Truman, who took the decision to drop the first weapon of mass destruction on the Japanese city, had insisted that “the world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians.”

But the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey concluded in its official report that “Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen

as targets because of their concentration of activities and population,” according to historian Howard Zinn.

UNFOLD ZERO and the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), which organized the first anniversary of the International Day for Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, delivered a strong message that the global civil society must force the governments not to abandon the complete disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

With the UN Conference on Disarmament, the multilateral body to negotiate disarmament and complete elimination of nuclear weapons, mired in an interminable phase of paralysis for the last 18 years, the civil society has to play a bigger role. “But we must remember that political will is not only generated at leadership level,” says Michael Moller, the acting director general of the UN office in Geneva.

“It is most often propelled by popular demand and we need this commitment because the total elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth is not a simply a noble goal but it is the ultimate and indispensable condition for guaranteeing long-term, meaningful international peace and security,” Moller told the participants at the UNFOLD meeting.

### Indonesia’s strong commitment

In 2013, Indonesia on behalf of the non-aligned countries proposed a strong resolution in the UN General Assembly to commemorate September 26 every year as an International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The underlying objective is to “enhance public awareness and education about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination, in order to mobilize international efforts towards achieving the common goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.”

The non-aligned countries reminded nuclear states about their forgotten “obligations” in Article VI of the Non-Proliferation of the Nuclear Weapons treaty, which stipulated the cessation of the nuclear arms race and complete nuclear disarmament.

“The NPT was a temporary arrangement resulting from the so-called ‘Grand Bargain’, by which non-nuclear States committed themselves not to acquire or develop nuclear weapons in exchange for access to peaceful use of nuclear

energy while, nuclear states committed themselves to nuclear disarmament,” says Ambassador Jorge Lomonaco, Mexico’s representative to the UN in Geneva.

“While non-nuclear states have fulfilled their obligations under the NPT, the nuclear states have not fulfilled their commitment [more than 40 years after NPT was signed], Ambassador Lomonaco told IDN.

The Mexican envoy highlighted the increasing dangers from an intentional or accidental detonation, including the slippage into the hands of non-state actors. “With the greater availability of studies and scientific research in our time, the reflection on the implications of a nuclear detonation, whether incidental or accidental, in the environment; the human, animal or vegetation health; climate change; food security, development and the economy; human displacement, and other dimensions of development,” Ambassador Lomonaco listed in his address as major issues that would require an urgent discussion.

Mexico alongside Norway, Austria and others are now engaged in intensifying the global campaign about the humanitarian consequences from the impact of a single nuclear detonation.

Indonesia, which is a leading campaigner for complete nuclear disarmament at the UN has called for a commitment to ensure “world-free-of-nuclear weapons.” Indonesia’s envoy Ambassador Triyono Wibowo said the nuclear states must eliminate their weapons in the Middle East and commit to disarmament.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which is one of the oldest multilateral bodies, adopted a resolution in March 2014 urging parliaments to ensure that governments must not use nuclear weapons as deterrents in national defence plans.

The IPU also called for strengthening the safety of all nuclear materials, consolidating existing nuclear-weapon free zones and supporting the establishment of new nuclear-free zones.

For almost 70 years, nations have been wrestling with the abolition of nuclear weapons. The UN General Assembly adopted the first resolution in January 1946 in London to eliminate atomic weapons. Several important developments marked the disarmament negotiations despite the arms race during the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union.

More countries have now acquired the deadliest atomic weapons of mass destruction during this period on the pretext that they would serve as deterrent in their immediate bilateral and regional conflicts.

### Contagious doctrine of nuclear deterrence

The two major nuclear states, the U.S. and Russia, have reduced their stockpile of atomic weapons from around 75,000 at the peak of the Cold War in the mid-1980s to around 20,000, But there are still “detailed, long-term, and well-funded programs” and no “concrete plans for achieving nuclear disarmament- and of course, no progress on negotiating a nuclear weapons convention,” says Ms Gabriele Kraatz-Wadsack, a UN disarmament official.

“We see the perpetuation of what Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called the “contagious doctrine of nuclear deterrence”, which has now spread to some nine countries,” Ms Kraatz-Wadsack lamented.

Despite the prolonged stalemate and the “rust” that has been building up in the disarmament machinery, there are some encouraging developments to raise the awareness and educate people about the need to eliminate nuclear weapons from the civil society, in which the Japan-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is also playing an important role.

Also, some governments such as Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Austria, and Kazakhstan, among others, played a concerted role in the campaign for abolition of nuclear weapons.

The increasing attention worldwide to the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and their implications under the humanitarian and human rights laws and increasing pressure on governments because of non-implementation of commitments are development, which would augur well for opening the door to future progress in nuclear disarmament.

Also the 87th World Peace Voyage – the Hibakusha’s “Journey to Hearth of the World” in 2015 to mark the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings is a significant initiative from Mayors of Peace to pressurize the nuclear states to destroy their arsenal. 28 September 2014

*D Ravi Kanth is a free lance journalist based in Geneva.*  
Image credit: Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Flickr CC BY 2.0.



## Zero Nuclear Weapons: A Never-Ending Journey Ahead



By **THALIF DEEN**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - When the United Nations commemorated its first ever “international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons,” the lingering question in the minds of most anti-nuclear activists was: are we anywhere closer to abolishing the deadly weapons or are we moving further and further away from their

complete destruction?

Jackie Cabasso, executive director of the Western States Legal Foundation, told IPS that with conflicts raging around the world, and the post World War II order crumbling, “We are now standing on the precipice of a new era of great power wars – the potential for wars among nations which cling to nuclear weapons as central

to their national security is growing.”

She said the United States-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) versus Russia conflict over the Ukraine and nuclear tensions in the Middle East, South East Asia, and on the Korean Peninsula “remind us that the potential for nuclear war is ever present.”

Paradoxically, nuclear weapons modernisation is being driven by treaty negotiations understood by most of the world to be intended as disarmament measures.

She said the Cold War and post-Cold War approach to nuclear disarmament was quantitative, based mainly on bringing down the insanely huge cold war stockpile numbers – presumably en route to zero.

“Now disarmament has been turned on its head; by pruning away the grotesque Cold War excesses, nuclear disarma-

ment has, for all practical purposes, come to mean “fewer but newer” weapons systems, with an emphasis on huge long-term investments in nuclear weapons infrastructures and qualitative improvements in the weapons projected for decades to come,” said Cabasso, who co-founded the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons.

The international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, commemorated on Nov. 26, was established by the General Assembly in order to enhance public awareness about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons.

There are over 16,000 nuclear weapons in the world, says Alyn Ware, co-founder of UNFOLD ZERO, which organised an event in Geneva in cooperation with the U.N. Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

“The use of any nuclear weapon by accident, miscalculation or intent would create catastrophic human, environmental and financial consequences. There should be zero nuclear weapons in the world,” he said.

Alice Slater, New York director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, told IPS despite the welcome U.N. initiative establishing September 26 as the first international day for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and the UNFOLD ZERO campaign by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to promote U.N. efforts for abolition, “it will take far more than a commemorative day to reach that goal.

Notwithstanding 1970 promises in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to eliminate nuclear weapons, reaffirmed at subsequent review conferences nearly 70 years after the first catastrophic nuclear bombings, 16,300 nuclear weapons remain, all but a thousand of them in the U.S. and Russia, said Slater, who also serves on the Coordinating Committee of Abolition 2000.

She said the New York Times finally revealed, on its front page the painful news that in the next ten years the U.S. will spend 355 billion dollars on new weapons, bomb factories and delivery systems, by air, sea, and land in September 2014.

This would mean projecting costs of one trillion dollars over the next 30 years for these instruments of death and destruction to all planetary life, as reported in recent studies on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear war.

She said disarmament progress is further impeded by the disturbing deterioration of U.S.-Russian relations.

The U.S. walked out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia, putting missiles in Poland, Romania and Turkey, with NATO performing military maneuvers in Ukraine and deciding to beef up its troop presence in eastern Europe, breaking U.S. promises to former Russian

President Mikhail Gorbachev when the Berlin wall fell that NATO would not be expanded beyond East Germany.

Shannon Kile, senior researcher for the Project on Nuclear Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) told IPS while the overall number of nuclear weapons in the world has decreased sharply from the Cold War peak, there is little to inspire hope the nuclear weapon-possessing states are genuinely willing to give up their nuclear arsenals.

“Most of these states have long-term nuclear modernisation programmes under way that include deploying new nuclear weapon delivery systems,” he said.

Perhaps the most dismaying development has been the slow disappearance of U.S. leadership that is essential for progress toward nuclear disarmament, Kile added.

Cabasso told IPS the political conditions attached to Senate ratification in the U.S., and mirrored by Russia, effectively turned START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) into an anti-disarmament measure.

She said this was stated in so many words by Senator Bob Corker, a Republican from Tennessee, whose state is home to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, site of a proposed multi-billion dollar Uranium Processing Facility.

“[T]hanks in part to the contributions my staff and I have been able to make, the new START treaty could easily be called the “Nuclear Modernisation and Missile Defense Act of 2010,” Corker said.

Cabasso said the same dynamic occurred in connection with the administration of former U.S. President Bill Clinton who made efforts to obtain Senate consent to ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the late 1990s.

The nuclear weapons complex and its Congressional allies extracted an administration commitment to add billions to future nuclear budgets.

The result was massive new nuclear weapons research programmes described in the New York Times article.

“We should have learned that these are illusory tradeoffs and we end up each time with bigger weapons budgets and no meaningful disarmament,” Cabasso said.

Despite the 45-year-old commitment enshrined in Arti-

cle VI of the NPT, there are no disarmament negotiations on the horizon.

While over the past three years there has been a marked uptick in nuclear disarmament initiatives by governments not possessing nuclear weapons, both within and outside the United Nations, the U.S. has been notably missing in action at best, and dismissive or obstructive at worst.

Slater told IPS the most promising initiative to break the log-jam is the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) urging non-nuclear weapons states to begin work on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons just as chemical and biological weapons are banned.

A third conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons will meet in December in Vienna, following up meetings held in Norway and Mexico.

“Hopefully, despite the failure of the NPT’s five recognised nuclear weapons states, (U.S., Russia, UK, France, China) to attend, the ban initiative can start without them, creating an opening for more pressure to honor this new international day for nuclear abolition and finally negotiate a treaty for the total elimination of nuclear weapons,” Slater declared.

In his 2009 Prague speech, Kile told IPS, U.S. President Barack Obama had outlined an inspiring vision for a nuclear weapons-free world and pledged to pursue “concrete steps” to reduce the number and salience of nuclear weapons.

“It therefore comes as a particular disappointment for nuclear disarmament advocates to read recent reports that the U.S. Government has embarked on a major renewal of its nuclear weapon production complex.”

Among other objectives, this will enable the US to refurbish existing nuclear arms in order to ensure their long-term reliability and to develop a new generation of nuclear-armed missiles, bombers and submarines, he declared.

27 September 2014

Image credit: Adam Zivner CC BY 3.0.



## OPINION: Sleepwalking Towards Nuclear War



By **HELGE LURAS**

OSLO (IPS) - New military measures to deter what NATO perceives to be a direct threat from Russia were adopted at the alliance's Heads of State meeting in Wales (Sep. 4-5). A few days earlier, President Barack Obama made promises in Estonia that the three tiny Baltic NATO member states would "never stand alone"

Since early 2014, Russia has done practically all that Western leaders have warned President Vladimir Putin in advance not to do. Crimea was occupied and annexed. Pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine were encouraged and given practical support. Later, Russian personnel and equipment came more and more openly into conflict with Ukrainian forces.

But the West's warnings to Russia did not stop there. Already several months ago, establishment figures and the media began to associate events in Ukraine directly with the situation in the Baltics and in Poland. NATO has responded to the Russian offensive against Ukraine, a non-NATO country, by shifting military resources towards the areas of NATO that it claims, but only by conjecture, are threatened by Russia.

But did anyone at the NATO summit warn that the alliance might create a self-fulfilling prophecy? Did anyone have the foresight to consider how tensions between Russian speakers and Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians might increase as a result of the hyperbole of the Russian threat? One should not assume hostile intentions in today's ethnically-charged world without good reason.

That some Western minds consider themselves, and by extension NATO, to be an idealistic force for peace, human rights and democracy, is beyond dispute. But the reality is that NATO countries – that is, the West – represent the world's most powerful military force, both conventional and nuclear.

Up to now, NATO has not challenged another nuclear armed entity and therefore has survived its own political-military escalation tendency. But in the case of Russia, the erroneous Western perception of self could cause a catastrophic and total war.

Since the Cold War, the West has swallowed up a large area formerly under the influence, if not outright control, of Soviet Russia. The hegemonic mind saw this as just

natural and of no business to an anachronism like Russia.

The future of humanity when expansion started in the 1990s was a Western future: liberal, democratic and free-market. Spheres of influence were the hallmark of others, exemplified by "reactionary" and authoritarian forces like Russia under Putin. Western influence is in another category – it is natural if not God-given.

In Russia, there is a clear and evolving bias in news reporting which the West characterises as "propaganda". In the West, there is less need to instruct the media directly, there is a reverse bias due to cultural indoctrination. Evidently the West is a keeper of the right values. There is no cause and effect. Evil just pops up. All things Russian are bad, deceitful, not to be trusted. But in Russia this feeds an undeniable paranoia in the psyche.

The West has retained one "acceptable" bogeyman in the atmosphere of religious tolerance that creates such cognitive dissonance as it struggles to come to grips with core tenets of original (radical) Islam. The Western "liberal mind" has at least one cultural object left to legitimately hate: Russian political culture and the strong man it produces.

The problem is that Russian and NATO leaders are not drunken poets pathetically fighting with untrained fists at a literary reception. They may act so, but are in fact front men of substantive and institutional systems that can wipe out all human civilisation in a short time.

Western leaders undoubtedly perceive that their power is waning. No more state-building in faraway countries for us. The end of omnipotence, indeed of paradigm, is obviously traumatic and difficult to consider with a cool mind. But the diminution of Western political power occurs with no corresponding weakness in pure military muscle.

This leaves the temptation of a "Mad Man Doctrine". If you can convince your opponent that you are willing to react disproportionately to what is at stake for you, he will fear you beyond the otherwise sensible. Everyone treats a mad man with caution.

In Ukraine, there is more at stake for Russia than for the West. Therefore Russia, as it has also shown, will not give up or allow itself or its allies to lose. In the Baltic countries, there is also more at stake for Russia than for the United States and for most other NATO countries as well.

For, in the post-Cold War, Russia has no ideology

beyond nationalism. Its most ambitious claims, even if unopposed, would come to a halt at the geographical outer limits of the ethnic Russian nation.

This is not to say that Russian nationalism could not become a factor of instability beyond Ukraine. Trouble is latent. The partly Russian-populated Baltic countries are now in NATO, and NATO is an institutionalised form of the Mad Man Doctrine. The danger of miscalculating the reaction for NATO as well as for Russia is therefore significant.

Little suggests that the West understand how risky the games in progress really are. NATO and Russia are nuclear powers. Sensible leaders on both sides understood as much during the Cold War. Nuclear powers must not go to war with each other. If at all, the conflicts must remain by proxy. Such insights must be rediscovered today.

NATO should concentrate on finding a way to downplay the conflict with Russia, compromise on Ukraine, and not follow what the United States seem intent on doing; escalating, increasing defence spending across the bloc, sending more troops to the Baltic countries. Appeasement, if the starting point is dumb-headed NATO-expansionism, can be a virtue as well as a vice.

Military means are already at play in the conflict between NATO and Russia. Some call for even more. Before pushing Russia further in the direction they claim not to want – ethnic expansionism – politicians in the West must remember that nuclear arms are the last weapons in the arsenal of both.

Luckily, Putin seems quite sane, with superior rationality to many of his Western counterparts. The irresponsible comparison between Putin and Hitler is therefore wrong in many respects, but not least because Hitler never had the bomb.

18 September 2014

*Helge Luras is founder and director of the Centre for International and Strategic Analysis (SISA) based in Oslo.*

Image: Mushroom cloud over Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands from Castle Bravo, the largest nuclear test ever conducted by the United States.

Image credit: United States Department of Energy Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.



# Mideast Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone Remains in Limbo

By THALIF DEEN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - After four long years of protracted negotiations, a proposal for a nuclear weapons-free zone (NWFZ) in the strife-torn Middle East remains in limbo – and perhaps virtually dead.

But United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a relentless advocate of nuclear disarmament, is determined to resurrect the proposal.

“I remain fully committed to convening a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone, free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction,” he said in his annual report to the upcoming 69th session of the General Assembly, which is scheduled to open Sep. 16.

Ban said such a zone is of “utmost importance” for the integrity of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT).

“Nuclear weapons-free zones contribute greatly to strengthening nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, and to enhancing regional and international security,” he noted.

The existing nuclear weapons-free zones include Central Asia, Africa, Mongolia, Southeast Asia, South Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Antarctica and Outer Space – all governed by international treaties.

Still, the widespread political crises in the Middle East – destabilising Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Palestine – may threaten to further undermine the longstanding proposal for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the militarily-troubled region.

The proposal, which was mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference may not take off – if at all – before the 2015 Review Conference scheduled for in the year.

If it does not, it could jeopardise the review conference itself, according to anti-nuclear activists.

Finland, which has taken an active role in trying to host the conference, has been stymied by implicit opposition to the conference by the United States, which has expressed fears the entire focus of the meeting may shift towards the de-nuclearisation of one of its strongest Middle East allies: Israel.

Hillel Schenker, co-editor of the Jerusalem-based Pal-

estine-Israel Journal, told IPS while it would appear that the recent Gaza-Israel war might have created additional problems for the convening of the conference, it actually opens new opportunities for progress.

Egypt played a key role as the host and major facilitator of the negotiations to arrive at a cease-fire, and Cairo remains the hub for the follow-up negotiations for dealing with the issues not dealt with in the initial cease-fire agreement, he said.

In the course of the current tragic round of mutual violence, he pointed out, there was a perception that a common strategic interest has evolved between Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and the Palestinian Authority led by President Abbas, against Hamas, which spills over to the threat from the Islamic fundamentalist forces that are active in Iraq and Syria.

“This unofficial alliance creates possibilities for the development of new regional security understandings,” Schenker added.

Such a development would require initiatives beyond a cease-fire, and the resumption of serious negotiations to resolve the entire Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he added.

Bob Rigg, a former chair of the New Zealand National Consultative Committee on Disarmament, told IPS there have already been many attempts at a conference on the weapons-free zone.

“All have come to nothing, principally because a regional nuclear weapons-free zone would pre-suppose the destruction, under international control, of Israel’s nuclear arsenal.”

The acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability was a key priority of Ben Gurion, Israel’s first leader, and has continued to be at the heart of its security policies ever since, said Rigg, an anti-nuclear activist and a former senior editor at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

He said while the government of Israel continues to be unwilling, in any context, to formally admit to the possession of nuclear weapons, there is no basis for any meaningful discussion of the issue, even if a conference actually takes place.

“Western governments which helped Israel to go nuclear

compound the problem, participating in this conspiracy of silence by never mentioning Israel’s nuclear weapons.”

For example, he said, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was once ferociously attacked by U.S. politicians and the media for saying that Israel had nuclear weapons.

Alice Slater, New York Director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation who also serves on the coordinating committee of Abolition 2000, told IPS that U.N. chief Ban quite correctly raised a serious warning about the future viability of the NPT in the absence of any commitment to make good on a pledge to hold a conference to address the formation of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The NPT took effect in 1970 providing that each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, she pointed out.

All but three nations in the world signed the treaty, including the five nuclear weapons states (UK, Russia, the United States, France, China).

Only India, Pakistan, and Israel refused to join the treaty and went on to acquire nuclear arsenals.

North Korea, taking advantage of the treaty’s unholy bargain for an inalienable right to so-called peaceful nuclear power, acquired the civilian technology that enabled it to produce a bomb, and then walked out of the treaty, said Slater.

The NPT was set to expire in 25 years unless the parties subsequently agreed to its renewal.

Schenker told IPS that without active American involvement, the conference will not be convened.

Whatever the outcome of the mid-term elections in November, President Barack Obama will then have two more years to establish his presidential legacy, to justify his Nobel Peace Prize and to advance the vision he declared in his 2009 Prague speech of “a world without nuclear weapons”.

He said the U.N. secretary-general issued a timely warn-



ing that a failure to convene the Mideast weapons-free-zone conference before the 2015 NPT review conference “may frustrate the ability of states to conduct a successful review of the operation of the (NPT) treaty and could undermine the treaty process and related non-proliferation and disarmament objectives.”

He said one of the primary tools that could be used to advance this process is the Arab Peace Initiative (API), launched at the Arab League Summit Conference in Beirut in 2002, which has been reaffirmed many times since.

The API offers Israel recognition and normal relations with the entire Arab world, dependent upon the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, along-

side the State of Israel.

He said the API could also be a basis for establishing a new regional regime of peace and security.

The convening of the international conference mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, if approached with diplomatic wisdom on all sides, could become one of the components of progress towards this new regional regime of peace and security, he noted.

The new strategic “alliance” in the region could be used as a basis for the convening of the conference, said Schenker.

A successful outcome of the negotiations over the Iranian nuclear programme could be another constructive building block towards the convening of the conference.

Slater told IPS the prospects for any success at this upcoming 2015 NPT Review, are very dim indeed and it is unclear what will happen to the badly tattered and oft-dishonored treaty.

“It is difficult to calculate whether the recent catastrophic events in Gaza and Israel will affect any change in Israel’s unwillingness to participate in the promised Middle East conference.”

All the more reason to support the efforts of the promising new initiative to negotiate a legal ban on nuclear weapons, just as the world has banned chemical and biological weapons, she declared.

11 September 2014

Image credit: UN Photo/Loey Felipe.



## UN Report Faults Humanitarian Vigilance in Response To Nuclear Detonations

By JAMSHED BARUAH

BERLIN (IDN) - About 22,000 nuclear weapons continue to threaten humankind's survival nearly 70 years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and more than 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted to date, according to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). But the world is far from prepared to effectively respond to nuclear weapons detonations, "even at basic levels of preparedness, let alone a large-scale nuclear war".

This perturbing view has been expressed in a study by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) undertaken in cooperation with OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) and UNDP (UN Development Programme) ahead of the first International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26.

The study says: "Anecdotal evidence, based on our interviews with United Nations humanitarian personnel in various agencies, indicates that nuclear detonations in populated areas, would come as a surprise to many of them – some assume plans exist for 'lower end' nuclear weapon detonation events, with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) assumed to play a leadership role in providing expertise, equipment, and operational capacity."

The study, 'An Illusion of Safety: Challenges of Nuclear Weapon Detonations for United Nations Humanitarian Coordination and Response', by UNIDIR experts John Borrie and Tim Caughley examines the finding of the first international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, held in Oslo, Norway, in March 2013, which said: "It is unlikely that any state or international body could address the immediate humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation in an adequate manner and provide sufficient assistance to those affected. Moreover, it might not be possible to establish such capacities, even if it were attempted."

Portraying a nuclear weapon detonation scenario, Borrie and Caughley say: "The instantaneous effects of such a detonation event – the blast, thermal radiation, and prompt radiation from the explosion of one or more nuclear weapons – will have created many casualties and destroyed a great deal of critical infrastructure. It will have generated fear and disruption, which may lead many people to alter their normal patterns of behaviour and make disruption worse (for instance, fleeing their homes to go to already overwhelmed hospitals because they fear radiation contamination). In an important sense, any response is by definition inadequate because the immediate harm has already been done."

According to the study, most experts seem to agree that the immediate needs of the victims in a nuclear weapon detonation event will fall on local and national authorities to the extent they still function. "In a highly populated area the humanitarian need will be vast, including from large numbers of seriously burned and injured people (many of them dying). Much of the expert literature in this area assumes that help will take days or longer to arrive – let alone international assistance."

Challenges to the humanitarian system

The report points out that although there have been international exercises in the recent past based on scenarios such as radiological "dirty bombs" or chemical weapons use, there have been no equivalent exercises in order to understand the challenges to the humanitarian system of assisting the victims of nuclear weapon detonations events in highly populated areas.

Besides, there is no focal point within the humanitarian system for a systematic planning for response to nuclear weapon detonation-specific phenomena. Furthermore, specialised standing responsibilities such as radiation monitoring and radiation decontamination at the field level in support of humanitarian operations in the event of nuclear weapon detonations do not appear to have explicitly been allocated, either to international agencies

or humanitarian partners.

A key finding of the study is that some specialised agencies view their mandated responsibilities as applying in civil radiological emergencies but not in cases of nuclear weapon use, or to certain kinds of nuclear weapon detonation scenarios (e.g. terrorism) but not others (e.g. state use, nuclear weapon accidents).

The authors of the report further point out that standing arrangements for coordination between the UN humanitarian system and relevant national authorities in the specific case of a nuclear weapon detonation event do not appear to exist, although the formation of bodies such as the Operational Preparedness Group on CBRN (Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) defence are encouraging developments.

"While we have no doubt the humanitarian system would swing into action as swiftly as it could, developing these arrangements in the heat of the crisis is not ideal, and would take time – with ample chance of confusion or misinterpretation that would be likely to impede the most timely and effective response," warns the study.

Yet another conclusion of the study is that threat or fear of further nuclear weapon detonation events could vastly complicate decision-making about the nature and scale of humanitarian coordination and response, let alone its delivery.

"In the hours, days, or even weeks following a nuclear weapon detonation event, its origin, or the identity of those responsible for it, may not be known. Such uncertainty could create further nuclear crises of its own.

"Moreover, in terms of risk assessment, humanitarian actors (including relevant United Nations agencies) may feel it is too hazardous to deliver humanitarian relief to the affected. For their part, the state (or states) affected might be unwilling to accept relief until the environment is sufficiently 'secure'. States in a position to offer assistance coordinated by the humanitarian system might be



unwilling to do so if they fear further nuclear weapon detonation events are plausible. This could exacerbate suffering for those directly affected or displaced," notes the study.

Though prevention is the best response to nuclear weapon detonation events, authors of the report feel that some advance thought and planning within the UN system "could plausibly reduce the overall level of human suffering arising from some nuclear weapon detonation events significantly, even if there is not much it could do in the immediate aftermath".

Organising a capacity for a response, however inadequate it may prove to be, is not simply a matter of respon-

sible anticipation, organisational cohesion, and readiness to meet public expectations. It would also help save lives in reducing the time necessary for devising decision-making channels, coordinating the mobilisation of resources, and resolving health issues relating to positioning personnel to conduct relief activities.

In essence, concludes the report, what is needed are systematic decision-making processes determined in advance and setting out clearly the premises on which mobilisation will be "triggered", based on assessments of the hazards arising, levels of contamination, and other risks to be weighed in deploying relief personnel.

According to Valerie Amos, UN Emergency Relief Co-

ordinator and Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, "this study reminds us all that until we achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, they will continue to pose the risk of catastrophic consequences for humanity – whatever the United Nations and its humanitarian partners endeavour to do to pick up the pieces."

23 August 2014

Image credit: UN Photo/Rick Bajornas.



# Ban on Nuke Tests OK, But Where's the Ban on Nuke Weapons?

By THALIF DEEN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - As the United Nations commemorated the International Day Against Nuclear Tests on Aug. 29, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon lamented the fact that in a world threatened by some 17,000 nuclear weapons, not a single one has been destroyed so far.

Instead, he said, countries possessing such weapons have well-funded, long-range plans to modernise their nuclear arsenals.

Ban noted that more than half of the world's total population – over 3.5 billion out of more than seven billion people – still lives in countries that either have such weapons or are members of nuclear alliances.

“As of 2014, not one nuclear weapon has been physically destroyed pursuant to a treaty, bilateral or multilateral, and no nuclear disarmament negotiations are underway,” he said.

There are still eight countries – China, North Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States – yet to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), whose ratification is required for the treaty's entry into force.

Alyn Ware, founder and international coordinator of the network, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), told IPS, “Although I support the Aug. 29 commemoration of the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, I would place greater priority on the issue of nuclear abolition than on full ratification of the CTBT.”

He said there is now a customary norm against nuclear tests (the nuclear detonation type) and only one country (North Korea) that occasionally violates that norm.

“The other holdouts are unlikely to resume nuclear tests, unless the political situation deteriorates markedly, elevating the role of nuclear weapons considerably more than at the moment,” Ware said.

The CTBTO (Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty

Organisation) is working very effectively on implementation, verification and other aspects even though the CTBT has not entered into force, he added.

Ware also pointed out the issue of nuclear abolition is more closely related to current tensions and conflicts.

“While nations still see a strong role for military options, including deterrence by force, then those with nuclear weapons will not be willing to relinquish them, and we face the risk of nuclear conflict by accident, miscalculation or even design,” warned Ware, a New Zealand-based anti-nuclear activist who co-founded the international network, Abolition 2000.

Kazakhstan was one of the few countries to close down its nuclear test site, Semipalatinsk, back in 1991, and voluntarily give up the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, with more than 110 ballistic missiles and 1,200 nuclear warheads.

Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, permanent representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, told IPS his country's decision to withdraw from membership of the “nuclear club” was more a question of political will because “Kazakhstan genuinely believed in the futility of nuclear tests and weapons which can inflict unimaginable catastrophic consequences on human beings and the environment.”

In 1949, Ban pointed out, the then Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear test, followed by another 455 nuclear tests over succeeding decades, with a terrible effect on the local population and environment.

“These tests and the hundreds more that followed in other countries became hallmarks of a nuclear arms race, in which human survival depended on the doctrine of mutually assured destruction, known by its fitting acronym, MAD,” he noted.

“As secretary-general, I have had many opportunities to meet with some of the courageous survivors of nuclear

weapons and nuclear tests in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Semipalatinsk.”

Their resolve and dedication “should continue to guide our work for a world without nuclear weapons,” he added.

He stressed that achieving global nuclear disarmament has been one of the oldest goals of the United Nations and was the subject of the General Assembly's first resolution as far back as 1946.

“The doctrine of nuclear deterrence persists as an element in the security policies of all possessor states and their nuclear allies,” Ban said.

This is so despite growing concerns worldwide over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of even a single nuclear weapon, let alone a regional or global nuclear war, he added.

Currently, there are five nuclear weapon states, namely the United States, Britain, Russia, France and China, whose status is recognised by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

All five are veto-wielding permanent members of the U.N. Security Council (P5), the only body empowered to declare war or peace.

The three other nuclear weapon states are India, Pakistan (which have formally declared that they possess nuclear weapons) and Israel, the undeclared nuclear weapon state.

North Korea has conducted nuclear tests but the possession of weapons is still in lingering doubt.

Ware told IPS the health and environmental consequences of nuclear tests gives an indication of the even greater catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons in a conflict.

This is what has spurred countries like Kazakhstan to establish the International Day Against Nuclear Tests as a platform to promote a nuclear-weapon-free world, he said.

“And it has spurred Marshall Islands to take this incred-



ibly David-versus-Goliath case to the International Court of Justice in The Hague (ICJ),” he added.

This has also given rise to the humanitarian consequences dimension, which has gained some traction and will be discussed at the third conference coming up in December.

But without increased confidence in the capacity to re-

solve conflicts without the threat or use of massive force, countries will continue to rely on nuclear deterrence, even if they do not intend to use the weapons, Ware said.

Thus, UNFOLD ZERO, which is promoting the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, is also advancing cooperative security approaches through

the United Nations to resolve conflicts and security threats, he added.

30 August 2014

Image credit: U.S. Air Force Public Domain.



# OPINION: Why Kazakhstan Dismantled its Nuclear Arsenal

By **KAIRAT ABDRAKHMANOV**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - August 29 is the fifth observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. One of the first decrees of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan was the historic decision to close on Aug. 29, 1991 the Semipalatinsk Nuclear test site, the second largest in the world.

Kazakhstan also voluntarily gave up the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, with more than 110 ballistic missiles and 1,200 nuclear warheads with the capacity to reach any point on this earth.

Many believed at that time that we took this decision because we did not possess the ability or competence to support such a massive atomic arsenal. Not true. We had then, and have even today, the best experts.

For us, it was more a question of political will to withdraw from the membership of the Nuclear Club because Kazakhstan genuinely believed in the futility of nuclear tests and weapons which can inflict unimagined catastrophic consequences on human beings and the environment.

The closing of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was followed by other major test sites, such as in Nevada, Novaya Zemlya, Lop Nur and Moruroa.

Therefore, at the initiative of Kazakhstan, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/35, on Dec. 2, 2009, declaring Aug. 29 as the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited the Ground Zero of Semipalatinsk in April 2010 and described the action of the president as a bold and unprecedented act and urged present world leaders to follow suit.

In the words of President Nazarbayev, this historical step made by our people, 23 years ago, has great significance for civilisation, and its significance will only grow in the

coming years and decades.

It is acknowledged today that the end of testing would also result in the ultimate abolition of nuclear weapons and hence the importance of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.

Kazakhstan was one of the first to sign the treaty, and has been a model of transforming the benefits of renouncing nuclear weapons into human development especially in the post-2015 phase with its emphasis on sustainable development.

It has been internationally recognised that nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the states of the region concerned enhance global and regional peace and security, strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes towards realising the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

Yes, there are political upheavals, and there will be roadblocks, but we have to keep pursuing durable peace and security. For these are the founding objectives of the United Nations.

Each year in the U.N.'s First Committee and the General Assembly, a number of resolutions are adopted, supported by a vast majority of member states calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments.

There are resolute and continuing efforts by member states, various stakeholders and civil society who advocate for an international convention against nuclear weapons.

We also see the dynamic action taken, especially by civil society, which brings attention to the devastating humanitarian dimensions of the use of nuclear weapons.

The meeting hosted by Norway in Oslo, and earlier in 2014 in Nayarit by Mexico, have given new impetus to this new direction of thinking. We hope to carry further

this zeal at the deliberations in Vienna, scheduled later in 2014.

The international community will continue its efforts on all fronts and levels to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

There was also a reaffirmation by the nuclear-weapon states of their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all states parties are committed under article VI of the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The international community, I am sure, with the impassioned engagement of civil society will continue to redouble its efforts to reach Global Zero.

29 August 2014

*Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov is the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations.*

Image credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.





# Austrian Parliament Backs Government Efforts For Nuclear Disarmament

By JAMSHED BARUAH

VIENNA (IDN) - As the Austrian government prepares to host the third international conference on the humanitarian consequences of atomic weapons on December 8-9 in Vienna, the county's parliament has provided it the legal basis for its commitment to usher in a world without nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

The forthcoming gathering in Vienna will be the third since the March 2013 conference in Oslo convened by the Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide who said the Conference had "provided an arena for a fact-based discussion of the humanitarian and developmental consequences of a nuclear weapons detonation".

Delegates from 127 countries as well as several UN organisations, the International Red Cross movement, representatives of civil society and other relevant stakeholders participated. Summarising the Conference, Barth Eide observed: "This broad participation reflects the increasing global concern regarding the effects of nuclear weapons detonations, as well as the recognition that this is an issue of fundamental significance for us all."

The second conference in Nayarit, Mexico, on February 13-14, 2014, discussed "global and long-term consequences of any nuclear detonation, accidental or deliberate, from the perspective and concerns of the 21st century society, including areas such as public health, humanitarian assistance, the economy, development and environmental issues, climate change, food security and risk management, amongst others".

Delegations representing 146 States, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and civil society organisations, participated in the Nayarit international gathering.

The Austrian offer to host the Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons evoked "great support from participants as a follow-up to Oslo and

Nayarit, to deepen the momentum, anchor these conclusions and take them forward", the Nayarit conference chair said, adding: "As it was expressed by many delegations, the Conference reiterates the invitation to nuclear weapon States and States non-parties to the NPT to participate in the Third Conference, in Austria."

The chair added: "In doing so, we need to take into account that, in the past, weapons have been eliminated after they have been outlawed. We believe this is the path to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. In our view, this is consistent with our obligations under international law, including those derived from the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) as well as from Common Article 1 to the Geneva Conventions.

"The broad-based and comprehensive discussions on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons should lead to the commitment of States and civil society to reach new international standards and norms, through a legally binding instrument.

"It is the view of the Chair that the Nayarit Conference has shown that time has come to initiate a diplomatic process conducive to this goal. Our belief is that this process should comprise a specific timeframe, the definition of the most appropriate fora, and a clear and substantive framework, making the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons the essence of disarmament efforts.

A new dynamic?

"It is time to take action. The 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks is the appropriate milestone to achieve our goal. Nayarit is a point of no return," he said.

Against this backdrop, in a unanimous resolution, the Austrian Parliament has pledged its "full support" for the forthcoming conference in Vienna, which it expects to "give a new dynamic to the international disarmament discourse, through including the humanitarian impact to its scope and facilitating greater involvement of civil society organisations".

The motion was introduced by the members of parliament Mag. Christine Muttonen (SPÖ and Co-president of the network Parliamentarians for Non-proliferation and Disarmament PNND) and Dr. Reinhold Lopatka (Chairman of the ÖVP group in the Austrian Parliament) on April 30 in the foreign affairs committee.

It urges the Federal Government "to continue its engagement on the international and European level for disarmament and for the complete prohibition of the development, sale, acquisition, proliferation and possession of nuclear weapons under international law".

The resolution tasks the government:

- to plead actively for the realisation of weapons of mass destruction-free zones at bilateral and multilateral level;

- in this regard, to adopt as its own the goal of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East stipulated in UN-Resolution 687 and to take initiatives to this end at multi- and bilateral level;

- to push for an effective ban in the EU on arms exports and in particular on means of delivery of nuclear weapons in crisis zones;

- to pronounce itself in favour of deleting nuclear deterrence from the NATO-doctrine;

- with respect to the current crisis in the Ukraine, to oppose any political or military act aiming at the expansion of nuclear deterrence;

- to condemn in strongest terms any threat to use nuclear weapons;

- to advocate for the strengthening and, where need be, the creation of non-military intergovernmental organisations for security and cooperation in Europe and beyond; and

- to advocate for a prohibition or at least for a stricter regulation of the export of nuclear technology in Europe.

The parliamentary resolution complies on the whole with the Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz's view

expressed in Nayarit, while offering to organise the third conference as follow-up: "Nuclear weapons are not only a permanent threat to all humankind but also a relic of the cold war that we must finally overcome. The international nuclear disarmament efforts require an urgent paradigm shift, not the least in light of the danger of further nuclear weapons proliferation." He added: "Nuclear disarmament is a global task and a collective responsibility."

A Sword of Damocles

According to new research, even a limited regional nuclear conflict would cause devastating global consequences for health, food security, climate, economy and the social order much beyond the immediate humanitarian emergencies. "This danger is by no means abstract. It is a Sword of Damocles above our heads and should be at the centre of international efforts. Moreover, the possibility of a nuclear explosion by accident, misjudgment or terrorism constitutes a considerable risk that we need to be aware of. Reliance on nuclear weapons is an outdated approach to security. A concept that is based on the total destruction of the planet should have no place in the 21st century", underlined Kurz.

"This discourse is especially necessary in Europe, where cold war thinking is still prevalent in security doctrines. 100 years ago, the era of weapons of mass destruction commenced with the devastating use of chemical weapons in World War I. In a today united Europe, we should use the commemoration to also make every effort to move beyond nuclear weapons, the most dangerous legacy of the 20th century", urged Kurz.

The importance of the forthcoming conference lies in the fact that Vienna is the seat of the only global organisation dealing with nuclear issues: the International Atomic Energy Organisation (IAEA). Together with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), it plays a vital role in preventing the further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Despite reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapons since the end of the cold War, however, the number of

nuclear weapons is still sufficient to extinguish human civilisation. At the same time, the number of nuclear armed states has risen and the technological hurdle to build these weapons is getting lower. Austria therefore holds the position that the prevention of nuclear weapons can only be achieved in conjunction with credible and irreversible nuclear disarmament and the international stigmatisation of nuclear weapons.

As was stressed in Oslo and Nayarit, in the event of a nuclear explosion, governments and relief organisations would not be in a position to provide humanitarian assistance adequate to the scale of the emergency. For this reason, Austria considers the close cooperation with these organisations and civil society at large an essential element to build the broad international support that is necessary for the elimination of nuclear weapons, according to a note posted on the Austrian Foreign Ministry's website.

A goal shared by humanity

Though a world without nuclear weapons is a goal shared by all humanity, it has remained elusive so far. An estimated 16.300 nuclear weapons still exist nearly 25 years after the end of the cold war. Nine states are believed to possess nuclear weapons, but as nuclear technology is becoming more available, more states, and even non-state actors, may strive to develop nuclear weapons in the future.

The Austrian Foreign Ministry argues: As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use by design, miscalculation or madness, technical or human error, remains real. Nuclear weapons, therefore, continue to bear an unacceptable risk to humanity and to all life on earth. Any use of nuclear weapons could cause gravest humanitarian emergencies and have catastrophic global consequences on the environment, climate, health, social order, human development and the economy.

A single detonation of a modern nuclear weapon would cause destruction and human suffering on a scale far exceeding the devastation seen in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

No State or international body would be able to provide adequate assistance. Nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to all humankind. These risks are not abstract. They are real, more serious than previously known and can never be eliminated completely.

Increased focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is, therefore, an important development and has a positive and uniting effect on international discussions about nuclear weapons. The more the international community discusses and understands the scale of these consequences and of the risks involved, the clearer the case and the stronger the sense of urgency become for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

With the forthcoming conference, Austria wishes to strengthen the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to contribute to the growing momentum to firmly anchor the humanitarian imperative in all global efforts dealing with nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament.

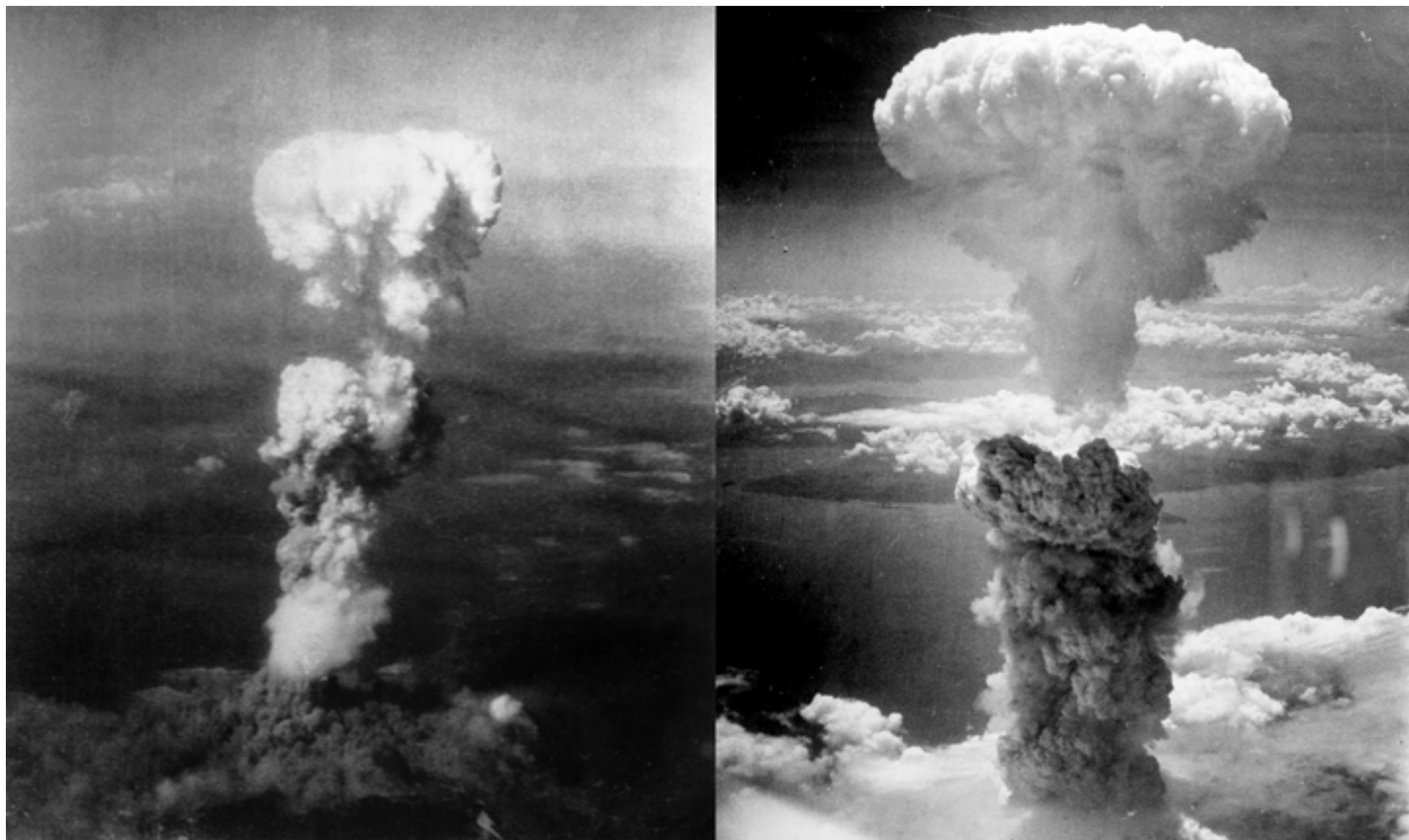
According to the Austrian Foreign Ministry, the Vienna Conference will be open to all interested parties. All states will receive official invitations and will be invited to nominate experts and/or senior officials. International organisations and civil society representatives with relevant expertise will also be welcome.

The conference will feature facts based discussions and expert presentations and aims to allow for an interactive debate among participants, and will also provide delegations an opportunity for statements of a more general nature. Plans are also in preparation for a limited sponsorship programme for participants from the least developed countries.

16 August 2014.



## Atom Bomb Anniversary Spotlights Persistent Nuclear Threat



By **SUVENDRINI KAKUCHI**

TOKYO (IPS) - It has been 69 years, but the memory is fresh in the minds of 190,000 survivors and their descendants. It has been 69 years but a formal apology has yet to be issued. It has been 69 years – and the likelihood of it happening all over again is still a frightening reality.

As foreign dignitaries descended on Japan to mark the 69th anniversary of the atomic bombing on Aug. 6 2014, the message from officials in the city of Hiroshima was one of urgent appeal to governments to seriously consider the enormous threat to humanity and the planet of another nuclear attack.

Survivors, known here as hibakusha, who have worked tirelessly since August 1945 to ban nuclear weapons worldwide, urged diplomats – including ambassadors from four of the nine nuclear weapons states (United States, Israel, Pakistan and India) – to heed the words of the 2014 Peace Declaration.

Representing the anguished wishes of aging survivors and peace activists, the declaration calls on policy makers to visit the bomb-scarred cities to witness first-hand the lasting devastation caused when the U.S. dropped its uranium bomb (Little Boy) on Hiroshima and its plutonium bomb (Fat Man) on Nagasaki three days later.

Some 45,000 people observed a minute of silence Aug. 6 2014 in a peace park close to the epicentre of the bomb, which killed an estimated 140,000 people in Hiroshima before the second bomb claimed a further 70,000 lives in Nagasaki.

The tragic events came as Japan was negotiating its surrender in World War II (1939-45).

The presence of so many survivors, whose average age is estimated to be 79 years, provided stark evidence of the debilitating physical and psychological wounds inflicted on those fateful days, with many hibakusha and their next of kin struggling to live with the results of intense and prolonged radiation exposure.

In a tribute to their suffering, the Hiroshima Peace Declaration states, “We will steadfastly promote the new movement stressing the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and seeking to outlaw them.

“We will help strengthen international public demand for the start of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention with the goal of total abolition by 2020,” the declara-

tion added.

But the likelihood of this dream becoming a reality is dim, with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington reporting earlier in 2014 that the nine nuclear weapons states possessed a combined total of 17,105 nuclear weapons as of April 2014.

The United States, the only state to deploy these weapons against another country, has steadfastly held out on issuing an official apology, claiming instead that its decision to carry out the bombing was a “necessary evil” to end World War II.

This argument is now deeply entrenched in global geopolitics, with states like Israel – not yet a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – vehemently protecting its arsenal as essential for national security in the face of protracted political tensions in the region.

Following Israel’s military offensive in Gaza, which resulted in 1,800 civilian casualties in the Palestinian enclave before a ceasefire brokered by Egypt came into effect Aug. 5 2014, some in the Arab community insist that Israel represents the biggest security threat to the region, and not vice versa.

China, a nuclear state with an inventory of 250 warheads and currently embroiled in a territorial dispute with Japan, was conspicuously absent from the proceedings.

With run-ins between East Asian nations in the disputed South China Sea becoming increasingly confrontational, peace activists here feel an urgent need to address tensions between nuclear weapons powers, including North Korea.

Professor Jacob Roberts at the Hiroshima Peace Research Institute told IPS, “The call is to ban nuclear weapons that kill and cause immense suffering of humans. By possessing these weapons, nuclear states represent criminal actions.”

He said the anti-nuclear movement is intensely focused on holding states with nuclear weapons accountable for not abiding by the 1968 NPT.

He cited the example of the Mar. 1 annual Remembrance Day held in the Pacific Ocean nation of the Marshall Islands, which suffered devastating radiation contamination from Operation Castle, a series of high-yield nuclear tests carried out by the U.S. Joint Task Force on the Bikini Atoll beginning in March 1954.

Thousands fell victim to radiation sickness as a result of the test, which is estimated to have been 1,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima blast.

In total, the U.S. tested 67 bombs on the territory between 1946 and 1962 against the backdrop of the Cold War-era nuclear weapons race with Russia.

In a bid to challenge the narrative of national security, the Marshall Islands filed lawsuits this April at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and separately in U.S. Federal District Court, against the nine nuclear weapon states for failing to dismantle their arsenals.

The lawsuits invoke Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which contains a binding obligation for five nuclear-armed nations (the U.S., UK, France, China and Russia) “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.”

As in Hiroshima, the United States has not apologised to the Marshall Islands but only expressed “sadness” for causing damage. A former senator from the Marshall Islands, Abacca Anjain Maddison, told IPS, “The U.S. continues to view the disaster as ‘sacrificing a few for the security of many.’”

The U.S. is not the only government to come under fire. Hiromichi Umebayashi, director of the Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (RECNA) at Nagasaki University, is a leading advocate for a nuclear-free zone in East Asia and a bitter critic of the administration of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, which is alleged to be currently pushing the argument that nukes are necessary for national security.

Umebayashi is spearheading a campaign to stop Japan’s latest decision to work closely with the United States, under a nuclear umbrella, on strengthening the country’s national defence capacities.

“North Korea’s nuclear threat in East Asia is used by the Japanese government to push for more military activities. As the only nation to be atom bombed, Japan is making a huge mistake,” the activist told IPS.

7 August 2014

Image credit: Left - Charles Levy. Right: Personnel aboard Necessary Evil. Derivative work: Binksternet. CC BY-SA 3.0.



# Nuke Proliferation in East Asia Affects International Security

By VALENTINA GASBARRI

ROME (IDN) - The 10th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 on April 28, 2014 can be especially propitious for standing back from the perennial present of international security issues and evaluating longer-term trends.

The threat posed by the spread of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles is one of the main security challenges of the 21st century. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War led to a gradual reduction both in the security framework and in the perception of security.

In order to address this challenge and develop appropriate solutions, accurate risk factors analysis is required, as well as the ability to generate a multi-dimensional response: promoting the development of a comprehensive non-proliferation regime while also trying to explore how nuclear energy can safely be harnessed for sustainable economic development. The implications of nuclear proliferation for international relations are difficult to predict but profound.

First, the spread of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles has had a deep impact on the bipolar system, freezing the most dangerous regional conflicts. This is the argument developed by “the school of realists”, in particular Kenneth Waltz, who believe that “more may be better” in the basic rationale of State actors.

Second, proliferation may affect the way wars may be conducted. Indeed, during the Cold War the competition between the two superpowers was merely the “continuation of politics with other means”, because a real war was avoided given the high destructiveness of the new technologies. There is also a widespread fear that these weapons may fall under the control of terrorists or other no-State actors who would be immune from threats of retaliation.

## Atomic ambitions

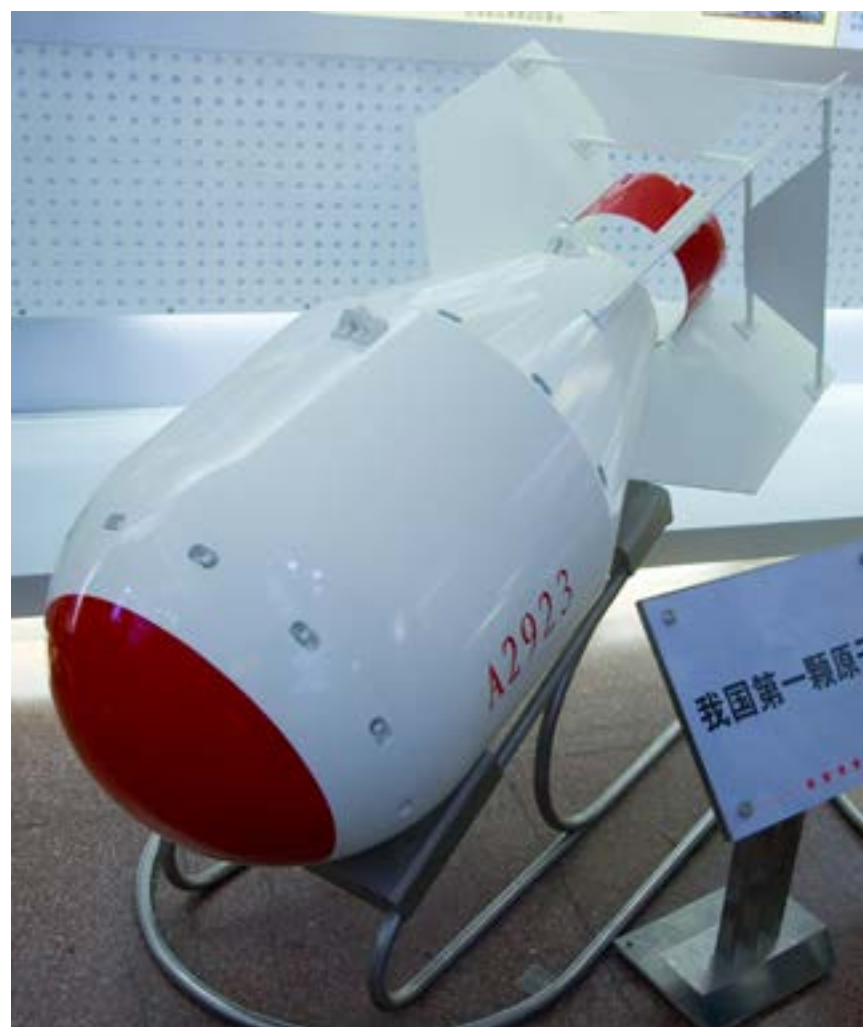
International efforts to stem the spread of nuclear weapons typically focus on the atomic ambitions of the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Iran. The leaders of the two countries still remain unmoved by international condemnation and pressure. In their power perception,

national security and international prestige derive from nuclear weapons and this view seems more compelling than the penalties and sanctions resulting from multilateral diplomacy (Res 1718, 1874, 2087, 2096 and 1965). Indeed, a comprehensive approach to non-proliferation seeks to dissuade leaders from pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities as a source of national prestige and security defence strategies.

The current North Korean nuclear crisis cannot be fully understood without a reference to both the historical nuclear ambitions of North Korea and its economic plight. Indeed, the DPRK remains isolated, economically under a near collapse, facing a devastating humanitarian crisis. Its decision to withdraw from the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty in 2003 and to restart graphite moderated reactor and nuclear ballistic tests have sparked international concern over nuclear proliferation and regional concern about the imminent crisis.

These concerns are heightened by the DPRK ballistic missile programme and the potential proliferation of both nuclear and ballistic missile knowledge and components.

According to the US intelligence estimates, the DPRK already has one or two nuclear devices and the ballistic missile development programme includes the NODONG and TAEPO DONG series of missiles. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) notes two distinct phases in the development of the DPRK’s nuclear programme: a first stage started with an agreement with the then Soviet Union for the cooperation in nuclear research in 1956 and a second phase with the construction of a natural urani-



um reactor at the Yongbyon complex in 1986.

In spite of international condemnation and the UN Security Council Resolutions, North Korea continues to launch short and long-range rockets. The last launch was on July 2, 2014, defying UN ban on the country testing such weapons. The launch came days before Chinese President Xi Jinping’s scheduled state visit to South Korea.

## Nuclear multilateral negotiations

The efforts to prevent North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons are among all the longest running and least suc-

cessful ones in international security of the past quarter century. Despite the very remote prospect for solving the crisis through multilateral dialogue, the crisis has had the interesting effect of bringing together all regional countries in the Six-Party talks, in collaborative efforts towards a common regional security.

Some promising breakthroughs occurred in 2005 and in 2008, with North Korea’s commitment to abandon its nuclear programme in exchange for development aid. Disagreements over the verification protocol stalled the process: North Korea was still in the US terrorism list and multilateral negotiations have not been held since 2008.

Two recent developments in particular have diminished political support for accommodation and engagement: North Korean participation in the construction of a nuclear reactor in Syria, destroyed in an Israeli attack in 2007 and the continuation of the North Korean nuclear tests.

Nuclear Security Summit held in The Hague on March 24-25, 2014, the P5 Meeting and the conclusions of the G7 highlighted that North Korea nuclear problem is a multi-faceted problem with not just global implications for the non-proliferation regime and global war on terrorism, but also regional and local implications for the security of Northern East Asia and the Korean Peninsula. The need for a global zero tolerance to the development of nuclear programmes as well as the need to create a binding legislation to face the current threats, has also been stressed.

However, despite the common goal of the main actors involved, namely Japan, China, South Korea and USA, each country has different priorities in exactly how to resolve the crisis that in turn could prove divisive depending on how the crisis continues to unfold.

## Japan’s Security Challenges and Opportunities

Japan’s protection under the US nuclear umbrella, as the main off shore security provider in the region, has virtually eliminated any need for it to develop nuclear weapons on its own over the past half-century. Indeed, Japan’s non-nuclear posture is often perceived to be rooted in strong national consensus based on emotional reactions to the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the 1954 Daigo Fujuryu-maru incident.

In order to protect the territories and lives of respective

citizens from threats of North Korean attacks, the US, Japan and South Korea have deployed ballistic missile defence. During 2009 and 2012 North Korean long-range missile tests, the US and allied forces reportedly made ready and available a number of ballistic missile defence systems, in addition to the intelligence gathering capabilities sent into the region. In response to the exacerbated tensions in April 2013, the US deployed a ballistic defence system in Guam.

Even the reliability of the US-Japan alliance, the North Korea nuclear threat, the regional background of a rapidly growing China in the process of military modernisation and the global challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime created the context to reconsider Japanese security policy. An important step has been the revision of the interpretation of the post-war peaceful Constitution on July 1.

Adopted in a cabinet resolution, the government decision to approve “collective defence” under certain circumstances represents an historic move to revise the country’s post-war defence policy. Once related laws are passed at the Diet, it will widen Japanese military defence options by ending the ban on exercising “collective self-defence” under certain circumstances such as when “clear danger” exists to the lives of Japanese citizens and foreign military personnel of countries “with close ties” to Japan who are engaged in protecting Japanese citizens and even in such a case military intervention by Japan’s self-defence force should be limited to the minimum amount necessary.

Reinterpreting the constitution will give Japan a more active role in coming to the aid of an ally, in particular the US military personnel when they are defending Japanese territory and people, and also the justification for reconsidering the rationale behind the alliance as a further consequence.

Another element which can impact Japan’s approach to security and to the North Korea nuclear menace is the recent decision of lifting part of the unilateral sanctions imposed along with the UN Security Council Resolutions in the wake of nuclear tests carried out by DPRK (North Korea). This renewed approach of Japan to the nuclear crisis came after the meeting between the two countries in Beijing and it contains the obligation for North Korea to faithfully re-investigate the abducted victims of Japanese

citizens by DPRK agents during the 1970s and the 1980s.

## Alignment Despite Antagonism

The role Beijing chooses to play in the light of Pyongyang’s accelerated nuclear activities and provocative rhetoric has highlighted the emergence of China as a geopolitical conflict mediator. In fact, beyond the North Korea crisis, the future configuration of the Korean Peninsula will be a major determinant of the geo-strategic balance in East Asia.

The course of China will be determined primarily by the sustainability of its economic prosperity, the adaptability of its political system to economic and social pressures, and the management of relations with the United States. The United States and China share a common set of overarching goals with regard to the Korean Peninsula: both wish to see a stable and non-nuclear North Korea. Considering how to achieve those aims, however, and under what terms exposes divergent priorities and strategic preferences between Washington and Beijing.

China’s role as host of the Six Party Talks and as North Korea’s chief benefactor, confirms the critical importance of its role in the US policy towards North Korea. In addition, China’s permanent seat on the Security Council ensures its influence on any UN action directed at North Korea. In addition to being North Korea’s largest trading partner by far, China also provides considerable emergency and humanitarian assistance in particular in food and energy aid as essential lifeline for the regime if Pyongyang. It is clear that Beijing cannot control Pyongyang’s behaviour, particularly in the cases of provocative nuclear tests and missiles launches, but even temporary cessation of economic and energy a Valentina Gasbarriid is significant for North Korea.

Beijing also fears the destabilising effects of a humanitarian crisis, significant refugee flows over its borders and of a consideration on how other nations, particularly the USA, would assert themselves on the peninsula in the event of a power vacuum.

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Image credit: Max Smith Public Domain.



# Remembering Hiroshima For The Sake Of Our Common Future

By **MONZURUL HUQ**

TOKYO (IDN) - Human memory is short, particularly when it comes to record war and destruction. Countless details of various times portraying the accounts of misery and human suffering probably remind us of something vague and abstract; something distant and detached, not at all related to the realities that we face at any given time. Since what is seen as vague or blurred hardly serves as solid evidence, and what is distant hardly seems inspiring for stirring our conscience to the level of awakening, we tend to forget about what war and destruction brings to mankind soon after the waves of tragic realities subside and pave the way for a relative tranquil setting, at least for a short time.

This fragile nature of our memory is what plays always at the hands of those who tend to take us back to the point where erasing the memory for the sake of so called greater group interest becomes easier and we turn back the wheels of progress for a journey taking the reverse course. This is why war and subsequent self destruction has become part of human being's eternal journey in quest of a peaceful and tranquil life.

The real causes for much of such failures might be traced back in our inability to grasp the depth of human sufferings that war always brings. And as long as we continue ignoring the fathom of that depth, turning swords into ploughshares will always remain a deferred dream, elusive ever for us to reach anywhere closer. And here, once again, memory can play a very important role; a role that would help us, at least in real terms, to grasp the depth of tragedy that war might bring at a time when our destructive capabilities by far supersede anything that we can think about. And it is precisely from this understanding that the fourteen survivors of Hiroshima atomic bombing in August 6, 1945, make a heroic contribution by knocking at our conscience through the recollection and recounting of memories of their innocent adolescent years, which were torn apart by the hellfire unleashed on that fateful morning.

## A Silence Broken

"Hiroshima - A Silence Broken" is a timely publication launched in March 2014, well ahead of the 70th anniversary

of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The genre of the book is oral history that tells the stories of fourteen Atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima who were born between the years 1927 and 1939. All of them survived the horrors of the aftermath of atomic bombing and eventually lived a long life, although bearing the severe wounds, both in body and in their mind. The road ahead of them had not been a paved one as they had to undergo life-long medical treatment that in most of the cases was successful in healing the wounds they suffered. However, the tacit discriminatory attitude that many of the survivors had to encounter in the society was probably more painful than the physical suffering and deep in their minds the scars remained painful for very long

The period immediately after the bombing was for Japan a time of confusion and also a time of disarray. In the chaotic post-war period, recalling the nightmarish experiences of A-bomb survivors became a taboo as Japan came under occupation and victors naturally were not happy about disclosing the evil acts of their own. Moreover, the deadly scars and deformed body shape that many of them had to live with also caused complexity in their mind and they gradually started keeping shut the doors of those bad memories. Many remained silent about the experiences they had to go through for being at a closer proximity of epicentres. But fortunately for the world, a significant number of survivors later decided to break the silence and come forward with their distinct narratives. Each of the fourteen stories told in "Hiroshima- A Silence Broken" are unique in nature, as the extent of real sufferings of the survivors had never been the same.

A burned woman, a dead child and an orphan

Tadashi Kihara remembers vividly a tragic scene that had been haunting him ever since he encountered it soon after the bombing. Though he was injured by the bombing, he still continued helping the search work for trapped and badly injured people around Hiroshima. During one of those nightly search missions he heard a crying voice begging for water. The voice was feeble but intense. Getting closer what he saw was a badly burned woman holding a baby in her arms. She had serious burns all over her body and the baby was holding mother's nipple on its lips. A closer look exposed the reality more vividly and

Kihara could sense that the baby was already dead and it was probably mother's refusal to accept the reality that she kept holding the dead baby as if she was still feeding the child with mother's milk. Here is how Kihara tells us of his own reflection, "There was nothing I could do for her. I put my hands together and apologised, and walked away. This still causes pain in my heart."

During his younger days Kihara was hiding the fact that he was an atomic bomb survivor. But after turning 65, he changed his mind and decided to tell his story to the future generations. What he wants now is not to let the young forget about the horrible experiences that once caused a badly wounded mother to hold her dead child closer to her burnt body and beg for water. Kihara must be feeling a sense of relief that the scene causing pain deep in his heart for so many years he could at last expose to others with the hope that no mother anywhere in this world ever have to experience anything like that.

All those fourteen survivors telling their stories in the latest collection were boys in their teens with full of vigor and energy. The atomic bomb not only shattered their dreams of a brighter future, but also changed their lives in a way that none could ever think about, even in their nightmares.

Much appealing is the story of Shoso Kawamoto, who came to know he had become an A-bomb orphan on his return to Hiroshima in search of his parents three days after the bombing. For 11-year old Kawamoto the only shelter he could find was in a temple that offered free food, but not enough to fill-up his hungry stomach. He later became a street orphan, struggling hard for mere survival, sometime by stealing rice cakes from street vendors, sometime working for gangsters groups systematically exploiting street children at the time. He regrets that not much has been told about those doubly disadvantaged victims of Hiroshima bombing, who after becoming orphans had to go through extreme difficulties. His narrative also informs us that before the bombing, about 8,600 elementary school students in Hiroshima were evacuated to the countryside. Of those 2,700 became orphans. Out of these only 700 were fortunate enough to find places at orphanages and the rest were left abandoned to become street children.

The new horror

What binds all these fourteen survivors is not only their common suffering, but also their self imposed isolation for quite long that kept them silent about telling others the horrors they had gone through. What prompted them to come forward and break the silence is the new horror that they have witnessed unleashing after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011. Since then they have taken it as their solemn responsibility to tell people about the extent of damage that nuclear fallout can cause.

Katsuyuki Shimoi is a survivor who tells us how watching Fukushima workers on a TV program reminded him of what happened to his brother a few days after the bombing and thus prompting him to tell his side of the story of survival and death after the radiation. His younger brother Akio was only 13 and was in a street car at the time of bombing along with his friend Nakamura. The car was completely destroyed, however, both survived and returned home. Here is what he tells us about what happened next: "After about 20 days, my brother's hair started falling out and red spots appeared all over his body... His shoulder and arms got thinner and thinner until they were like chopsticks... My brother was only 13, but he looked like an old man when he passed away. I later heard that his friend Nakamura passed away on the same day."

It was more than 65 years after that, seeing a worker in the Fukushima nuclear power plant on TV Shimoi he thought he saw a rash on the worker's arms, the same kind of rash that caused his brother so much pain leading to his death. It made him shudder and prompted him to break his silence.

Recording the testaments of A-bomb survivors is a timely initiative taken by Soka Gakkai Hiroshima Peace Conference. The Conference believes that the end to the nuclear age will not come unless strong public opinion is mobilised for gaining support for nuclear abolition. "Hiroshima - A Silence Broken" is the eighth volume of the collection of Hiroshima atomic bomb survivors' testimonies over the years and first to be published after the Fukushima disaster.

Soka Gakkai Hiroshima Peace Conference has decided to publish the latest volume in English translation as well for making the voices of atomic bomb survivors widely heard outside Japan too. And as the world is getting ready



to mark the seventieth anniversary of that deadly man-made disaster in a year's time, this makes it a timely publication reminding us not only of the horrors of the past, but also of the path that we need to take to stop forever the deadly race leading to our common destruction. *Monzurul Huq is a Bangladesh journalist, who has authored three books in Bengali on Japan and other subjects. He moved to Japan in 1994 after working at the United Nations Information Center in Dhaka and BBC World Service in London. He represents two leading national dailies of Bangladesh - Prothom Alo and the Daily Star - and contributes regularly to a number of other important publications in Bangladesh. He has written extensively both*

*in English and Bengali on matters related to Japan and East Asia. He is also a visiting professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Yokohama National University and Keisen University, teaching subjects related to Japanese politics, Japanese media, the developing world and world affairs. He also works as a radio broadcaster for NHK. A member of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan since 2000, he has served at the Board of Directors of the Club for two consecutive terms before being elected president of the Club.*

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Image credit: UN Photo-Mitsuo Matsushige.



## Egypt Continues Efforts For A WMD-Free Mideast



By **BAHER KAMAL**

MADRID (IDN) - In spite of social, economic and political instability in Egypt and other Arab countries, Cairo has lately intensified its efforts aimed at eliminating, as soon as possible, all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East.

Egyptian diplomacy fears that further delays in taking specific actions to declare the Middle East a nuclear free zone, may lead to a nuclear armament race in the region, in view warnings that some major countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, might decide to go nuclear to face Israeli and Iranian nuclear threat.

Against this backdrop, and in view of the ongoing process of preparations for the 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review, Cairo has launched an intensive diplomatic campaign to gain further support for its recent, new initiative aimed at unlock the present impasse.

The Egyptian initiative calls on all Middle East countries as well as the five permanent members (P5) – United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, and France – of the Security Council to deposit official letters of engagement to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, endorsing the declaration of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Formulated last year and endorsed by the 22 member countries of the Arab League in November 2013, the initiative also calls on “all those countries in the region who have not signed or ratified any of the international treaties on weapons of mass destruction, to commit themselves, before the end of the year, to sign and ratify all related treaties, simultaneously, and to deposit the confirmation of their commitment with the Security Council”.

Egyptian Foreign Minister, Nabil Fahmy, called on the UN Secretary General to coordinate the implementation of all these steps simultaneously, as a prerequisite for success – specifically, “Israel to join the UN Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to ratify the UN Chemical Weapons Convention, and to sign and ratify the UN Biological Weapons Convention”.

The Egyptian initiative also urges Syria to ratify the UN Convention on Biological Weapons, and take the steps to which it has committed itself to implement the UN Chemical Weapons Convention as well.

In exchange, all Middle East countries are to commit themselves to the completion of all required procedures to ensure their accession to all international treaties aimed at banning weapons of mass destruction and related arrangements.

The plan includes Egypt’s ratification of the UN Biological Weapons Convention, and the signature and ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, while continuing international efforts to ensure the organisation in 2014 of the international conference on nuclear weapons in the Middle East, which was decided by the May 2010 NPT review meeting, with the specific goal of declaring the Middle East a nuclear-free-zone.

The Egyptian initiative was once more endorsed by the League of Arab States during its meeting mid-February 2014 in Cairo, which focused on ways to mobilise the largest possible international support for it.

An Egyptian diplomatic source, which participated in the elaboration of the initiative, told IDN on condition of anonymity, that the initiative had received a “quasi deadly” hit due to the recent “suspension” of the Israeli-Palestinian-engineered talks.

“Nevertheless, and in spite of the feeble hope that Tel Aviv will implement the measures proposed by the Egyptian plan, the Arabs are determined to intensify efforts to warn against the dangers of not freeing the region from all weapons of mass destruction,” the source added.

The “dangers” the source referred to are related to a potential nuclear armament race in the region. In fact, former Saudi ambassador to the United States, Prince Turki al-Faisal, warned in 2011 that nuclear threats from Israel and Iran might force Saudi Arabia to follow suit.

On November 27, 2013, IPS reported that Saudi Arabia’s unyielding opposition to an interim nuclear agreement with Iran had triggered speculation about its own projection of military power in the Middle East.

The Wall Street Journal pointed out that the Saudis might conclude that international acceptance of a nuclear programme of any kind by Iran would compel them “to seek their own nuclear weapons capability through a simple purchase.” The likely source: Pakistan, whose nuclear programme was partly funded by the Saudis.

On November 22, 2013, the BBC reported quoting Senator Edward Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, that while efforts had gone into stopping the Iranian atomic programme, “it is clear that must also be expended to ensure that other nations in the Persian Gulf do not themselves develop a nuclear weapons capability”.

“The senator has asked the president to share the administration’s assessment of possible nuclear co-operation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as well as to halt talks about US-Saudi co-operation on the transfer of nuclear technology,” according to BBC.

It added that “intelligence was circulating in Nato that Pakistani nuclear weapons made on behalf of Saudi Arabia were ready for delivery in the event that Iran crossed the nuclear threshold or the kingdom faced some other dire emergency.”

### UN Adopt Two Egyptian Resolutions

Fresh impulses were imparted to the Egyptian plan thanks due to the approval of two Egyptian draft resolutions, which were adopted by the UN General Assembly mid-December 2013.

The first resolution is related to the creation of a nuclear free zone in the Middle East. The second relates to “the

threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.”

The process for the establishment of a nuclear-free-zone in the Middle East has suffered successive delays. As the international conference to free the region from nukes, which was scheduled to take place in December 2012 in Finland, was postponed once more.

Key parties to the organisation of such a conference (the UN, USA, UK and Russia) announced in mid-2013 a new postponement of the conference “sine die”, alleging it was due to tensions in the region.

Reacting to this announcement, the League of Arab States issued a statement rejecting the postponement of the conference and its declared reasons, noting it is all about a new attempt “to protect Israel’s nuclear arsenal”.

In spite of its reiterated refusal to announce any official position about its nuclear arsenal, there is a wide international consensus, joined by the prestigious Stockholm Institute for Peace Research (SIPRI), that Israel is one of the nine nuclear powers, including the P5, India, Pakistan, and North Korea.

In view of its intensive efforts, on May 22, 2014 Egypt was elected to chair the three-day sessions of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, with the participation of 65 Conference member States, including the P5.

Ambassador Walid Mahmoud Nasser, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations and other Geneva-based international organisations, in a statement on May 22, 2014, said that the Conference discussions were taking place within the framework of the international efforts to activate the role of the UN Conference on Disarmament, in order to launch negotiations for an international treaty to free the world from nuclear weapons.

The objective of the Conference is to find ways how to reach the appropriate legal framework and adopt practical measures for nuclear disarmament, according to the Egyptian ambassador.

He also explained that the Conference discussions dealt with the initially different viewpoints, of those who want to reach a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, and others calling to adopt a gradual process to complete the framework of an international treaty, starting by working on an agreement to stop the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

He added that the discussions touched upon the assessment of the current situation with respect to nuclear disarmament, and the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, as well as the role of the different parties, including the nuclear states, and the proposed initiatives in this regard.

The Geneva discussions also dealt with the extent of the link between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, according to the Egyptian representative, who stressed the priority that Egypt attaches to nuclear disarmament, and to the launch of negotiations aimed at reaching a binding international treaty on nuclear disarmament, at the earliest opportunity.

Nasser expressed the hope that these discussions would lead to push the Conference out of its state of stalemate since 1996, and take concrete steps to develop a work programme with respect to these issues. He underlined Egypt’s continuous efforts aimed at establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The launch of an international Middle East conference was decided by the May 3-28, 2010 NPT Review conference in New York, following persistent pressures by Egypt, the original author of the Middle East nuclear free zone initiative since the late 60s- with the backing of all Arab countries, Turkey, and the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as some European nations, mostly Scandinavian.

Following intensive consultations, Finland announced its readiness to host the international conference, and Jaakko Laajava, the under-secretary of State in Finland’s foreign ministry, was appointed as facilitator of the conference which was expected to take place “broadly in 2012”.

While a WMD-free zone eludes the Middle East, other regions, including entire continents, are already living in nuclear free zones: Latin America and the Caribbean; the South Pacific; South-East Asia; Central Asia; and Africa. These count for 39 percent of the world population in 115 countries around the world.

9 June 2014

Image credit: US Navy Public Domain.



# Peaceful Transitions From The Nuclear To The Solar Age

By HAZEL HENDERSON

ST. AUGUSTINE, Florida (IPS) - Japanese Buddhist and president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Daisaku Ikeda's Peace Proposal 2014 elevated my focus from the daily news to my longer term concerns for more peaceful, equitable and sustainable human societies to assure our common future. These broader concerns are now shared by millions of humans who have transcended purely personal, local and nationalistic goals and become prototypical global citizens.

Breakdowns in our current institutions now cause daily crises and are, as always, driving new breakthroughs as humans seek new solutions. Stress has always been a tool of evolution – as recorded in the 3.8 billion years of life forms on our home planet.

Today's crises are all consequences of our former myopic technological and social innovations addressing short-term problems without anticipating their system-wide longer-term effects. This is how I became concerned about how human burning of fossil fuels and digging in the Earth for our energy which led me to join the World Future Society in the 1960s. I was then leading an effort to clean New York City's polluted air, living close by a huge coal-burning power plant pumping smoke and soot into the play park where I and other mothers watched our infants.

Fast forward to 2014, and I'm still a card-carrying futurist and on the Planning Committee of the Millennium Project which tracks our human family's 15 Global Challenges. Our latest State of the Future Report 2014 tracks where we are progressing and where we are falling short in addressing these challenges: sustainable development and climate change; water; population and resources; democratisation; long-term policy making; globalisation of information technology; rich-poor gap; health; decision-making capacities; conflict resolution; improving the

status of women; transnational organised crime; energy; science and technology, and global ethics. This Millennium Project has participants from academia, government, civic society and businesses in fifty countries.

At the same time, Daisaku Ikeda, also my esteemed co-author of Planetary Citizenship, leader of SGI's 12 million members, outlines his annual Peace Proposal for 2014, as he has done since 1983. Ikeda, born in 1928, is one of the world's most distinguished global citizens.

Ikeda's Peace Proposal 2014 – Value Creation for Global Change: Building Resilient and Sustainable Societies – engages United Nation issues: moving beyond the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Agenda of 191 countries in Rio+20 in Brazil in 2012, as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These now embrace the transition from fossil and nuclear energy to the more decentralised, cleaner, greener, knowledge-richer, green economies now under way. I came to similar conclusions in my Mapping the Global Transition to the Solar Age (2014). Retiring human uses of fossil fuels, uranium and nuclear power plants and weapons is now feasible with current technologies as outlined in many reports covered in the 2014 Green Transition Scoreboard\*.

Political will in many countries is still hostage to special interests, lobbying and money from these legacy sectors and their perverse subsidies. Civic movements worldwide are pressuring pension funds and university endowments to divest from fossilised sectors and shift to cleaner, greener, more sustainable investments. Veteran financial experts, including Jeremy Grantham and Robert A. G. Monks, now join these critics, along with asset managers offering “fossil-free” portfolios which often outperform dirtier assets. As nuclear power plants are being decommissioned in the United States and Europe due to cheaper wind, solar and efficiency alternatives, many in Asia are still planned, even in China which now leads the world in solar energy.

Huge conceptual breakthroughs are needed to shift old paradigms and theory-induced blindness. One such is the rapidly developing proposal “Iran Goes Solar” by the Planck Foundation for Iran to end run the entire political debate about its right to develop civilian nuclear power. This could bypass all sanctions, Israel's concerns about another nuclear weapons state in the Middle East and “electrify” the upcoming United Nation Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

While Ikeda rightly calls for a “non-use” agreement under NPT, the Planck Foundation's plan is a paradigm shifter. Iran could accelerate its transition from both nuclear and fossil fuels by immediately acquiring blocks of shares in China's solar energy companies and then purchasing as many of their solar panels as possible. This is already a much cheaper alternative to building nuclear reactors or fossil fuel power plants.

Iran's bountiful oil reserves would stay underground as valuable feedstocks for industrial use rather than burning them, a plan I proposed in the NBC-TV Today Show in 1965! Details of the Planck “Iran Goes Solar” plan also call for expanding rail services on the Silk Road to China, greening desert lands with salt-loving plants as in their DesertCorp plan for expanding seawater-based agriculture in many desert regions.

Today's breakdowns are indeed producing the new systemic plans and breakthroughs long-proposed by futurists and planetary citizens. All these plans for our common future and green economies are covered by Ethical Markets Media(United States and Brazil), but often overlooked in mainstream media.

23 May 2014

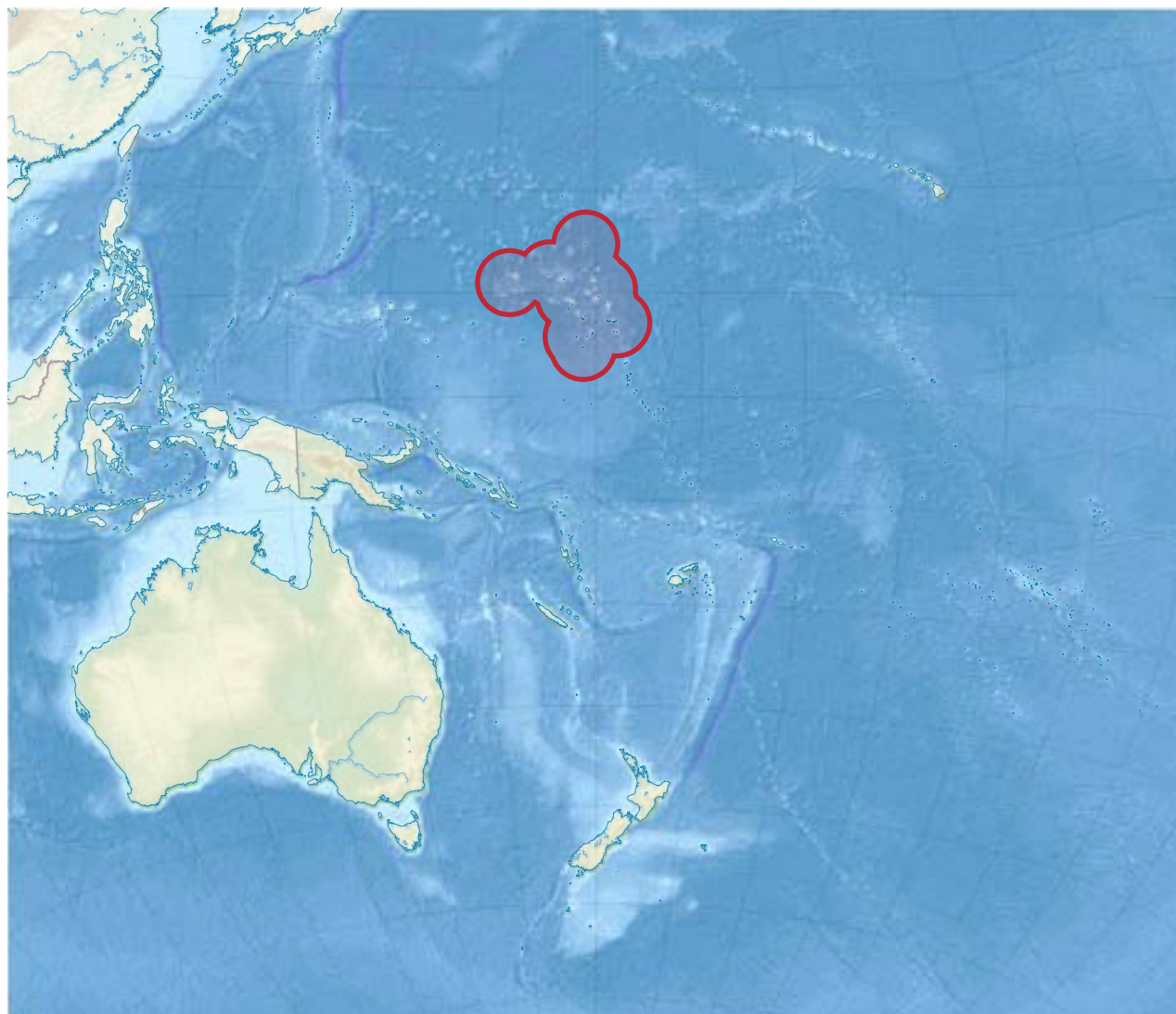
*Hazel Henderson is the president of Ethical Markets Media (USA and Brazil) and creator of the Green Transition Scoreboard\*.*

Image Credit: UN Photo/R Kollar





## Eyewitness to Nuke Explosion Challenges World Powers



By **THALIF DEEN**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - When the Foreign Minister of Marshall Islands Tony de Brum addressed a nuclear review Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting at the United Nations in April 2014, he asked whether anyone in the room had witnessed a nuclear explosion.

The question was met, not surprisingly, with resounding silence.

As a nine-year-old boy, the minister vividly remembered seeing the white flash of the Bravo detonation on Bikini atoll, six decades ago. It was 1,000 times more powerful than Hiroshima, he told PrepCom delegates, mostly proponents of nuclear disarmament.

A two-week-long meeting of the PrepCom for the upcoming 2015 review conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) ended in predictable disappointment.

John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy and the U.N. Office of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA), told IPS the PrepCom succeeded in adopting an agenda for the 2015 conference.

But “to no one’s surprise, it did not accomplish anything else,” he added.

Burroughs, a member of the international legal team for Marshall Islands, said the most dramatic development of the PrepCom was the announcement of the Marshall Islands filing on Apr. 24 of lawsuits against the nine nuclear-armed states: the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council, namely the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia, along with Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea.

The cases, before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, claim those states have failed to meet obligations of nuclear disarmament and cessation of the nuclear

arms race under the NPT and general international law, said Burroughs.

Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted 67 nuclear weapons tests in the Marshall Islands triggering health and environmental problems which still plague the nation with a little over 68,000 people.

The NPT, which came into force in 1970, requires a review conference to be held every five years. The last review conference took place in 2010.

The only nuclear powers which have refused to join the treaty are India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea (which joined and later withdrew from the NPT).

South Korea’s Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se, who chaired a meeting of the Security Council on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), pointed out in early May 2014 that North Korea “is the only country in the world that has conducted nuclear tests in the 21st century.

“Notwithstanding the efforts of the international community, North Korea has continued to develop its nuclear weapons over the last two decades, and is now threatening its fourth nuclear test,” he added.

If North Korea succeeds in acquiring nuclear weapons, he said, it will seriously undermine the NPT regime and exacerbate tension and instability in Northeast Asia.

Ambassador Enrique Roman-Morey of Peru, who chaired the PrepCom, admitted the meeting was unable to agree on an action plan for NPT.

“But this was due to lack of time, not lack of political will,” he said, pointing out the PrepCom does not negotiate.

Asked about the difficulties facing negotiators, he said when nuclear issues are discussed there are problems “from the first letter to the last letter” in the negotiated document.

A “working paper” resulting from the PrepCom will be

the basis for future negotiations at the Review Conference.

Under the treaty, all parties to the NPT pledge not to transfer nuclear weapons or assist or encourage any non-nuclear weapon state to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons.

Similarly, each non-nuclear-weapon state undertakes not to receive the transfer of nuclear weapons or manufacture or otherwise acquire them.

Burroughs told IPS the PrepCom, like previous such meetings in the years prior to review conferences, could not reach consensus on recommendations to the 2015 conference.

Many states rejected the effort of the PrepCom chair to craft a compromise document.

The NPT nuclear-weapon states effectively maintained that commitments made by the 2010 Review Conference relating to nuclear arms control and disarmament should be carried forward into the next five-year period, he added.

He said the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other groupings of non-nuclear weapon states held that the 2015 conference should adopt a more far-reaching plan of action that leads to verified, timebound elimination of nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future.

Many non-nuclear weapon states also said the proposed recommendations should have taken much fuller account of the conferences on humanitarian consequences of nuclear explosions, the last two held in Norway and Mexico, as well as the first-ever High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament held in the General Assembly in September 2013.

Burroughs said the debate at the PrepCom set the stage for consideration of a crucial question going into the 2015 Review Conference: “Should non-nuclear weapon states

insist, even if doing so results in no agreed outcome, that the conference set in motion multilateral negotiations on achieving a world free of nuclear weapons?”

A serious effort to that end was made in the 2010 conference but was rejected by the nuclear weapon states.

“Or, should they once again, as in the 1995, 2000, and 2010 conferences, agree to lesser commitments that have gone largely unfulfilled?” he said.

Still, most of those commitments remain valid and relevant whatever the 2015 conference does.

Thomas M. Countryman, U.S. assistant secretary at the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, told PrepCom delegates that in 2015, Washington will “look to build upon the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, where the conference approved a comprehensive, 64-item Action Plan, the first of its kind in the NPT’s 44-year history.”

He said the United States will issue a national report on the steps taken so far to implement key elements of the 2010 Action Plan that uses a common framework agreed by all five nuclear weapon states.

“We will also highlight our contributions to International Atomic Energy Agency programmes harnessing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for efforts like fighting disease, improving food security, and managing water resources,” he added.

12 May 2014

Image credit: TUBS CC BY-SA 3.0.



# Interfaith Leaders Jointly Call to Abolish Nuclear Arms

By MICHELLE TULLO

WASHINGTON (IPS) - On the eve of an April 2015 meeting at the U.N. headquarters in New York on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), more than 100 representatives of 11 faith groups from around the world have pledged to step up their efforts to seek the global abolition of nuclear weapons.

Gathered at the U.S. Institute of Peace here on Apr. 24 2014, the participants, composed of influential representatives of the Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths, among others, said their traditions teach that the threat posed by nuclear weapons was “unacceptable and must be eliminated”.

Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an international grass-roots Buddhist organisation based in Japan, hosted the event.

“The continued existence of nuclear weapons forces humankind to live in the shadow of apocalyptic destruction,” according to a statement issued at the end of the one-day conference.

“The catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons cannot be fully communicated by numbers or statistics; it is a reality that frustrates the power of both rational analysis and ordinary imagination.”

Signatories of the statement include representatives from the Muslim American Citizens Coalition and Public Affairs Council, the Friends Committee on National Legislation and Pax Christi International.

The conference, the latest in a series on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, came as delegates from around the world prepared to convene in New York for the NPT PrepCom, set to run Apr. 28 through May 9. That meeting will help lay the groundwork for the 2015 Review Conference, also slated for New York, on implementing the NPT’s goals of non-proliferation and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

“Nuclear deterrence theory does not work like it used to. In order to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons, the only way is to create an era in which there are no nuclear

weapons,” Hirotsugu Terasaki, vice-president of Soka Gakkai and executive director of Peace Affairs of Soka Gakkai International, told IPS.

“The president of our organisation has said, ‘Nuclear weapons are not a necessary evil, they are an absolute evil.’”

## Prodding the process

One goal of Apr. 24 2014 symposium was to flesh out the fatal consequences of nuclear weapons, including ramifications that go well the immediate fallout of a nuclear strike.

For instance, keynote speaker Dr. Andrew Kanter, former director of Physicians for Social Responsibility, told the participants of scientific findings that even a small detonation could cause a widespread deadly famine by accelerating climate change and disrupting global agriculture.

Others discussed the need to engage the Permanent Five members of the U.N. Security Council in the broader conversation. As a first step, the Apr. 24 statement will be presented to the chair of the NPT PrepCom.

“We need to think again about what we mean by security and how we experience security,” Marie Dennis, co-president of Pax Christi International, said. “As faith-based communities, we are in a position to ask those kinds of questions.”

Since 1970, when the NPT became effective, its regular review conferences have produced few successes other than the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which bars all nuclear explosions – including those, such as took place in the Marshall Islands, for testing purposes.

Additionally, the five nuclear-armed signatories have met annually since 2009. In April 2014, they met in Beijing where they reaffirmed past commitments and solidified a reporting framework to share national progress on meeting treaties.

More than 100 representatives of 11 faith groups from around the world have pledged to step up their efforts to seek the global abolition of nuclear weapons. Also present

at the symposium was Anita Friedt, an official on nuclear policy at the U.S. State Department. She described some of the reasons that nuclear abolition has been such a frustratingly slow process.

“Why can’t we just stop and give up nuclear weapons? This is really hard work,” Friedt said.

“If we just say today we’re just going to give up nuclear weapons, there’s no incentive for other countries to do so, necessarily. Unfortunately, it is more complex than it may seem at the surface.”

There are also significant bureaucratic challenges to the ongoing NPT negotiations. The U.S. Congress, for instance, failed to ratify the CTBT in 1999 and only barely ratified President Barack Obama’s New START Treaty – a strategic arms-reduction agreement between the U.S. and Russia – in 2010.

“It’s a slower pace than I would like; it’s a slower pace than our president would like,” Friedt said.

Yet SGI’s Terasaki says global faith communities are well placed use their broad leverage to try to influence, and speed up, this process. The Apr. 24 event, he noted, was the first time such a discussion had come to the United States.

“We want to help re-energise the voice of faith communities,” he said, “and explore ways to raise public awareness of the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons.”

## Obligation to disarm

The conference occurred on the same day that the Marshall Islands filed an unprecedented lawsuit before the International Court of Justice against the United States and eight other nuclear-armed countries for not upholding their commitments to the NPT and international law.

“Article VI [of the NPT] defines an obligation to negotiate in good faith for an end to nuclear arms and disarmament,” David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and a consultant to the Marshall Islands lawsuit, filed on Apr. 24, told IPS.

“This lawsuit indicates that each of the nuclear armed

states are modernising their nuclear arsenal. You can’t modernise your arsenal and say you’re negotiating in good faith.”

Five countries are currently party to the NPT: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. However, the Marshall Islands is also suing India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan, claiming that those countries are bound to the same nuclear disarmament provisions under international law.

The small island nation, in Micronesia in the Pacific Ocean, is not suing for monetary compensation. Rather, its government wants the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to declare the nine countries in breach of their treaty obligations and to issue an injunction ordering them to begin negotiating in good faith.

Krieger says the Marshall Islands have “suffered gravely” as a result of nuclear testing carried out by the United States between 1946 and 1958.

“They don’t want any other country or people to suffer the consequences that they have,” he said, noting that the residents of the Marshall Islands have suffered health effects in the generations since the testing stopped, including stillborn babies and abnormally high rates of cancer.

Out of the nine nuclear-armed countries, only the United Kingdom, India and Pakistan accept the ICJ’s jurisdiction. The other six countries, including the United States, are to be invited to the court in order to state their reasons for not fulfilling their obligations under the NPT.

Still, just to be sure that the United States answers for its responsibility to the NPT, the Marshall Islands has also filed a lawsuit in a U.S. federal court in San Francisco.

25 April 2014

Image credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten.





## U.S.-Dependent Pacific Island Defies Nuke Powers

By THALIF DEEN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The tiny Pacific nation state of Marshall Islands – which depends heavily on the United States for its economic survival, uses the U.S. dollar as its currency and predictably votes with Washington on all controversial political issues at the United Nations – is challenging the world’s nuclear powers before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.

The lawsuit, filed on Apr. 24 2014 is being described as a potential battle between a puny David and a mighty Goliath: a country with a population of a little over 68,000 people defying the world’s nine nuclear powers with over 3.5 billion people.

John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy and the U.N. Office of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA), told IPS the Marshall Islands and its legal team strongly encourage other states to support the case, by making statements, and by filing their own parallel cases if they qualify, or by intervening in the case.

Burroughs, who is a member of that team, said the ICJ, in its 1996 advisory opinion, held unanimously that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

And these cases brought by the Marshall Islands nearly 18 years after the ICJ advisory opinion “will put to the test the claims of the nine states possessing nuclear arsenals that they are in compliance with international law regarding nuclear disarmament and cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date.”

The nine nuclear states include the five permanent members (P5) of the U.N. Security Council, namely the United States, the UK, France, China and Russia, plus India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

Burroughs said three of the respondent states – the UK, India, and Pakistan – have accepted the compulsory juris-

diction of the Court, as has the Marshall Islands.

For the other six states, he said, the Marshall Islands is calling on them to accept the Court’s jurisdiction in these particular cases.

“This is a normal procedure but the six states could choose not to do so,” said Burroughs.

Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted 67 nuclear weapons tests, triggering health and environmental problems which still plague the island nation.

Tony de Brum, the foreign minister of Marshall Islands, was quoted as saying, “Our people have suffered the catastrophic and irreparable damage of these weapons, and we vow to fight so that no one else on earth will ever again experience these atrocities.”

The continued existence of nuclear weapons and the terrible risk they pose to the world threaten us all, he added.

The suit also says the five original nuclear weapon states (P5) are continuously breaching their legal obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Article VI of the NPT requires states to pursue negotiations in good faith on cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and nuclear disarmament.

India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea are not parties to the treaty.

But the lawsuit contends that all nine nuclear-armed nations are still violating customary international law.

Far from dismantling their weapons, the nuclear weapons states are accused of planning to spend over one trillion dollars on modernising their arsenals in the next decade.

David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, which is strongly supportive of the law suit, said, “The Marshall Islands is saying enough is enough.”

He said it is taking a bold and courageous stand on behalf of all humanity, “and we at the foundation are proud to stand by their side.”

In a statement released on Apr. 24, Archbishop Des-

mond Tutu of South Africa said, “The failure of these nuclear-armed countries to uphold important commitments and respect the law makes the world a more dangerous place.

“We must ask why these leaders continue to break their promises and put their citizens and the world at risk of horrific devastation. This is one of the most fundamental moral and legal questions of our time,” he added.

Burroughs told IPS the United States maintains that it is committed both to the international rule of law and to the eventual achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

“The United States should defend the case and widen the opportunity for the Court to resolve the wide divide of opinion regarding the state of compliance with the disarmament obligations,” he added.

The other five states which have not accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court are being asked to do likewise.

As to the case against the UK, a key issue is whether the UK has breached the nuclear disarmament obligation by opposing General Assembly efforts to launch multilateral negotiations on the global elimination of nuclear weapons, said Burroughs.

For India and Pakistan, because they are not parties to the NPT, the case will resolve the question of whether the obligations of nuclear disarmament are customary in nature, binding on all states.

He said it will also address whether the actions of India and Pakistan in building up, improving and diversifying their nuclear arsenals are contrary to the obligation of cessation of the nuclear arms race and the fundamental legal principle of good faith.

25 April 2014

Image: Kwajalein Atoll

Image credit: NASA Public domain.





## U.S.-Russia Sabre Rattling May Undermine Nuke Meeting



By **THALIF DEEN**

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The growing tension between the United States and Russia over Ukraine has threatened to unravel one of the primary peace initiatives of the United Nations: nuclear disarmament.

As they trade charges against each other, the world's two major nuclear powers have intensified their bickering –

specifically on the eve of a key Preparatory Committee (PrepCoM) meeting on a treaty to stop the proliferation of these weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The “Thirteen Steps” agreed upon at a review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2000 and the 64-point Action Programme, together with the agreement on the Middle East WMD Free Zone proposal at the 2010 Conference, had augured well for the strength-

ened review process, former U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala told IPS.

But he warned that, “However the actual achievements, the return to Cold War mindsets by the U.S. and Russia and the negative record of all the nuclear weapon states have converted the goal of a nuclear weapon free world into a mirage.

“Unless the Third Prepcom reverses these ominous trends, the 2015 Conference is doomed to fail, imperiling the future of the NPT,” warned Dhanapala, who is also president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

The Third PrepCom for the upcoming 2015 Review Conference of the NPT is scheduled to take place at the United Nations Apr. 28 through May 9.

But a positive outcome will depend largely on the United States and Russia, along with the other declared nuclear powers, Britain, France and

China, who are also the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council.

Ray Acheson, director of Reaching Critical Will, a programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), told IPS the April 2014 PrepCom is being held at a time of high tensions between the two countries with the largest stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

The United Nations describes the 1970 NPT as “a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament”.

The treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon states.

As of now, there are 190 parties to the treaty, including the five nuclear-weapon states, namely the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia.

But the other nuclear weapons states - India, Israel and Pakistan - have refused to join the NPT. North Korea joined and withdrew in 2003.

She said neither of these countries has fulfilled their obligation to negotiate the elimination of these weapons and in fact, both spend billions of dollars upgrading them and extending their lives into the indefinite future.

“Nuclear weapons are inherently dangerous and the risk of their use by accident or on purpose warrants urgent action on disarmament,” Acheson added.

During 2014, she pointed out, the NPT nuclear-armed states must report on their concrete activities to fulfill the disarmament-related actions of the 2010 NPT Action Plan.

The extent to which the nuclear-armed states can report the achievement of meaningful progress in implementing their commitments will be a strong indicator of their intention to serve as willing leaders and partners in this process, she noted.

But “none of the public releases issued thus far by the nuclear-armed states has given any reason to expect they have given serious consideration to the implementation of most of those commitments.”

Alice Slater, New York director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, told IPS there is “alarming sabre rattling on the eve of the NPT PrepCom.”

She said the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) builds up its military forces to “protect” Eastern Europe. The media reports only part of the story, justifying NATO

war games based on events in Ukraine; former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton compares Putin to Hitler; and the New York Times front page blares “Cold War Echo, Obama Strategy Writes Off Putin”.

“Yet there's little reporting on Russia's security fears as NATO expands up to its borders, inviting even Ukraine and Georgia to join,” said Slater, who also serves on the Coordinating Committee of Abolition 2000.

This, she said, despite President Ronald Reagan and President George Bush's promises to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, that NATO would not expand beyond East Germany.

Nor is it reported how the U.S., in 2001, quit the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Treaty, planting missiles in Poland, Romania and Turkey, she added.

In his closing statement as president of the historic 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which extended the treaty for an indefinite duration, Dhanapala said, “The permanence of the Treaty does not represent a permanence of unbalanced obligations, nor does it represent the permanence of nuclear apartheid between nuclear haves and have-nots.

“What it does represent is our collective dedication to the permanence of an international legal barrier against nuclear proliferation so that we can forge ahead in our tasks towards a nuclear weapons-free world.”

Slater told IPS that deteriorating U.S.-Russian relations bodes poorly for progress at the paralysed NPT process, which even before this latest eruption of enmity failed to implement the many promises for nuclear disarmament since 1970.

But this new crisis may motivate nations to press more vigorously for the process that began in Oslo (at the 2013 conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons), addressing the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and urging their legal ban.

With 16,000 nuclear bombs in Russia and the U.S., non-nuclear weapons states must step up their efforts for a ban treaty, she added.

The P-5 nuclear powers boycotted these meetings in Oslo (in 2013) and Mexico (February 2014) while Indian

and Pakistan joined 127 nations in Oslo and 144 in Mexico. In 2014, Austria will host a follow-up.

This new process raises a contradiction highlighting the growing reality gap in the “nuclear umbrella” states, Slater said.

They ostensibly support nuclear disarmament and deplore the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war in this burgeoning new global conversation about its humanitarian effects, while continuing to rely on lethal nuclear deterrence, she noted.

Article VI of the NPT requires all treaty parties to be responsible for its fulfillment.

“The spectre of war in Europe may give new impetus to efforts to ban the bomb,” warned Slater.

Acheson told IPS that unlike the other weapons of mass destruction – chemical and biological weapons – nuclear weapons are not yet subject to an explicit legal prohibition.

“Now is the time to address this anomaly, which has been allowed to persist for far too long. History shows that legal prohibitions of weapon systems, their possession as well as their use, facilitate their elimination.”

She said weapons that have been outlawed increasingly become seen as illegitimate.

They lose their political status and, along with it, the money and resources for their production, modernisation, proliferation, and perpetuation.

In the context of rising tensions between two countries with nuclear weapons it is more imperative than ever that non-nuclear weapon states take the lead to ban nuclear weapons, Acheson stressed.

22 April 2014

Image credit: Executive Office of the President of the United States public domain



## Hiroshima Meet Falls Short Of Outlawing Nukes



By **MONZURUL HUQ**

TOKYO (IDN) - The mere fact that the two-day foreign ministerial meeting of the 12-nation coalition of non-nuclear states took place in the Japanese city of Hiroshima, gives the clue to its symbolic significance. Being the first city in the world to witness the horrors of atomic destruction, Hiroshima, from that very fateful day almost 70 years ago, remains at the forefront of global efforts to learn about the devastating impact weapons of mass destruction can cause and also serves as a reminder of the necessity of eliminating nuclear weapons. That symbolic gesture of holding the meeting in Hiroshima on April 11-12, 2014 received added value as the ministers listened to the stories of atomic bomb survivors before starting their formal discussion.

The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) is a coalition of states that came into being in 2010 with the aim of leading the international efforts in nuclear disarmament. Composed of Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria,

the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, the NPDI, through its regular meetings and declarations and statements, focuses on ways to accelerate the process of nuclear disarmament. The Hiroshima conference was the eighth NPDI meeting since the group was formed.

### All of it sounds pretty good

Prior to the start of the Hiroshima conference, Fumio Kishida, the Japanese Foreign Minister, published an opinion article in the Wall Street Journal Asia where he stressed the importance of adopting a multilateral approach to nuclear disarmament and also outlined the priorities that the global community needs to work out for achieving the desired goal of a nuclear free world. He expressed concern over North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and reiterated Japan's commitment in tackling the Iranian nuclear issue.

Japanese Foreign Minister also did not fail to mention about the lessons his country had learned from the accident at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station in

March 2011. Since nuclear power generation is an issue linked closely to nuclear safety, Kishida pledged Japan's continued support for countries that are building up their capacities in the field of nuclear security, and vowed to share the lessons learned from Fukushima nuclear accident.

The Hiroshima conference touched upon most of the issues that the Japanese foreign minister raised in his Wall Street Journal article and a joint statement issued at the end of the meeting outlined the priorities and actions that the global community needs to take for fostering further momentum for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. The statement underlined the need of extending forever the nearly 69 years record of non-use of nuclear weapons and encouraged all states to contribute actively and constructively to pursue practical and effective measures that will strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime based on NPT.

While condemning strongly North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes by mentioning that they

“undermine NPT and the global non-proliferation regime as well as pose a great threat to regional and global peace and stability”, the statement also welcomed the start of the implementation in Iran of the first-steps under the Joint Plan of Action and expressed hope that the on-going negotiations with the country will lead to the final and comprehensive resolution of Iran's nuclear issue. It further said that to remove international concerns regarding Iran's nuclear activities, Iran needs to implement swiftly and steadily measures such as the ratification, and implementation of its Additional Protocol.

The NPDI member states also recognised the importance of the role played by the civil society and underlined the need to enhance disarmament and non-proliferation education. The joint statement welcomed the opportunity to engage with civil society, including NGOs, students, academics and the media.

### The loopholes

However, the International Campaign to abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which is a coalition of NGOs and civil society organisations advocating for the abolition of nuclear weapons, expressed disappointment with the outcome of Hiroshima meeting. In a statement issued immediately after the ministerial meeting, ICAN pointed out that “the foreign ministers were unable to agree that the world needs to close the legal loopholes on weapons of mass destruction, and outlaw nuclear weapons.”

ICAN is strongly in favour of starting a negotiation process that would lead to a framework for a legal prohibition of nuclear weapons and the organisation feels that an absence of any binding prohibition would not bring any tangible outcome. The anti-nuclear group suggests that a legal prohibition “would fulfill and strengthen the NPT and create conditions for disarmament by establishing a clear room against possession of nuclear weapons; challenge the assertion that nuclear weapons provide security; and provide a strong moral incentive for nuclear possessor States to eliminate their arsenals; and reinforce non-proliferation efforts worldwide.”

The group has also pointed out a few conflicting positions on nuclear issues being pursued by the 12 NPDI states. As seven of the twelve NPDI governments rely on nuclear weapons in their security strategies, ICAN feels that they bear a particular responsibility in remov-



ing the threat to the world posed by nuclear weapons. A more convincing step taken by those governments would rationally be the one that would first address the conflicting position by revising their security strategies to bring them in line with the NPDI's declared position on nuclear weapons.

Moreover, Japan and Australia, the two leading countries of the NPDI, are also taking a number of steps that run contrary to what NPDI policy statements are calling for. Japan now looks set for continuing the process that would result in accumulating large quantities of weapons-grade plutonium; and Australia sells uranium, the raw material for nuclear weapons, to all the NPT nuclear weapons states.

### Which way to go now?

Despite such criticisms and drawbacks; discussions that had taken place at the Hiroshima meeting clearly point out the significance of such initiatives at a time when the community of nations is getting ready for the next round of NPT Review Conference in 2015. As the Hiroshima joint statement rightfully mentions that with the 2015 NPT Review Conference fast approaching, it is necessary that all the state parties fully comply with the obligations and commitments, particularly with the full and prompt implementation of all the actions in the 2010 Action Plan. It should be noted that the nuclear-weapons states made an unequivocal undertaking in the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, a pledge that was reconfirmed at the 2010 conference. However, the world has moved no further in achieving that long cherished desire of the majority of human being.

“Declarations and statements being issued periodically by the NPDI concerning the pace of NPT negotiations and the need to move swiftly on non-proliferation and disarmament reminds us not only of the necessity of taking steps towards the right direction, but also warns us of the serious consequences the global community might face in case we fail to take timely action,” noted an informed observer.

“So, to end with, we can once again go back to what the Japanese foreign minister said in his Wall Street Journal article, which is: ‘increased cooperation, transparency, rule of law and other cornerstones of 21st century diplomacy led global stockpiles (of nuclear weapons) to fall around 17,000 (from the Cold War era height of 70,000). While this is a significant decrease, our progress must not stop there.”

*Monzurul Huq is a Bangladesh journalist, who has authored three books in Bengali on Japan and other subjects. He moved to Japan in 1994 after working at the United Nations Information Center in Dhaka and BBC World Service in London. He represents two leading national dailies of Bangladesh – Prothom Alo and the Daily Star – and contributes regularly to a number of other important publications in Bangladesh. He has written extensively both in English and Bengali on matters related to Japan and East Asia. He is also a visiting professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Yokohama National University and Keisen University, teaching subjects related to Japanese politics, Japanese media, the developing world and world affairs. He also works as a radio broadcaster for NHK. A member of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan since 2000, he has served at the Board of Directors of the Club for two consecutive terms before being elected president of the Club.*

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