

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS



2016 Report of the Joint Media Project



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HIROTSUGU TERASAKI

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

As observed by various international efforts for peace and nuclear disarmament, last year marked the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The international community is now entering a new phase of concrete discussions focused on the entire elimination of all nuclear weapons.

At this time many countries are calling for the negotiation of a new nuclear weapons prohibition treaty to form the first step toward elimination of all such weapons.

Nuclear-weapon states and their allies assert that such negotiation would be premature insisting that current security concerns legitimize their stance. They argue that while nuclear weapons exist, they have no choice but to maintain their own nuclear deterrents.

The Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations convened in February, May and August 2016 at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

During the second session of the Open-ended Working Group held in May, the SGI submitted a working paper titled “Nuclear weapons and human security” which emphasized that “the challenge of nuclear disarmament is not something that concerns only the nuclear-weapon States; it must be a truly global enterprise involving all States and fully engaging civil society. All States have an obligation to promote and participate in good faith negotiations for disarmament, bringing them to a successful conclusion.”

As Buddhists we uphold the inherent value and dignity of life, the aforementioned working paper states “at the heart of the nuclear weapons issues is the radical negation of others,” and urges “this can only be countered through a sustained effort to expand our individual and shared capacities for imaginative empathy.” This working paper has been recorded as UN document A/AC.286/NGO/17.

Together with other faith groups, the SGI issued a joint statement calling for urgent action for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. During the Open-ended Working Group session we asserted that starting the negotiation of a legal framework prohibiting nuclear weapons is both timely and necessary.

In his 2009 proposal “Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition,” Daisaku Ikeda, president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), observed: “If nuclear weapons epitomize the forces that would divide and destroy the world, they can only be overcome by the solidarity of ordinary citizens, which transforms hope into the energy to create a new era.”

Faced with the daunting challenges before us, we stand at an important juncture in history. Calls for the legal prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons as a first step toward a world finally and permanently free from nuclear weapons are mounting.

The SGI will continue striving to strengthen and expand citizens’ solidarity, increasing the momentum that will lead to a world free from nuclear weapons.





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DAVID KRIEGER

President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (www.wagingpeace.org).

The most stunning truth about the Nuclear Age is this: Nuclear weapons are capable of destroying civilization and most complex life on the planet and very little is being done to remedy this overriding danger. Humanity is experiencing the “frog’s malaise.” It is as though the human species has been placed into a pot of tepid water and is content to calmly sit there while the temperature rises to the boiling point.

There is virtually no political will on the part of national leaders to alter this dangerous situation and, despite legal obligations to negotiate in good faith for an end to the nuclear arms race and for nuclear disarmament, there is no major effort among the nuclear-armed countries to achieve nuclear zero. Sadly, while the non-nuclear weapon states are meeting to discuss filling the legal gap to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons, those countries that possess the weapons are purposefully absent from the discussions.

Each of the nine nuclear-armed countries is not only boycotting international discussions on banning and eliminating nuclear weapons. Each of these nine countries is in the process of modernizing its nuclear arsenal, wasting valuable resources on weapons that must never be used and doing so while basic human needs for billions of people go unmet and unattended. Despite this unjust and deplorable situation, most of the seven billion people on the planet are complacent about nuclear weapons. This only adds fuel to the fire under the frogs.

In the Nuclear Age, humanity is challenged as never before. Our technology, and particularly our nuclear weapons, can destroy us. But before we can respond to the profound dangers, we must first awaken to these dangers. Complacency is a recipe for disaster. I find complacency to be rooted in ACID, an acronym for Apathy, Conformity, Ignorance and Denial. If we want to prevail over our technologies we must move from Apathy to Empathy; from Conformity to Critical Thinking; from Ignorance to Wisdom; and from Denial to Recognition of the danger. But how are we to do this?

The key is education – education that promotes engagement; education that forces individuals and nations to face the truth about the dangers of the Nuclear Age. Education can take many forms, but it must begin with solid analysis of current dangers and critiques of the lack of progress in stemming the dangers of the Nuclear Age. We need education that is rooted in the common good. We need education that provides a platform for the voices of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We need education that makes clear the instability and theoretical nature of nuclear deterrence. We need education that challenges the extreme hubris of leaders who believe the global nuclear status quo can survive human fallibility and malevolence. We need education that can break through the bonds of nuclear insanity and move the world to action for nuclear zero.

With regard to such education on nuclear dangers, I applaud the work of the International Peace Syndicate’s flagship agency IDN-InDepthNews and its partners, with valuable support from Soka Gakkai International. Their goal is to educate for a nuclear weapons-free world. May they continue to be a strong voice for sanity in a world deeply in need of what they have to offer.

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Nuclear Weapons Challenge the World's Highest Court

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | THE HAGUE (IDN) - After ten days of public hearings involving teams of eminent international lawyers – some backed by staunch proponents of 'nuclear zero' and others clinging to the doctrine of 'nuclear deterrence' – the world's highest court is faced with a challenging task of far-reaching significance.

Not the least because this year marks the twentieth anniversaries of the 1996 'advisory opinion' by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the opening for signature of the CTBT, the treaty banning all nuclear tests everywhere – nuclear tests that are at the heart of nuclear proliferation.

Explaining the core subject for ICJ's deliberation, a famous Dutch lawyer Phon van den Biesen said, "from a legal perspective", the issues presented by the three legal cases "are ordinary ones, but a positive outcome will, spectacularly, change the world".

This is because there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. "Their use could render meaningless in an instant all of humankind's efforts to resolve global problems," warns Buddhist philosopher, educator, author, and anti-nuclear activist, Daisaku Ikeda. He is President of the Tokyo-based lay Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

In his 2016 annual Peace Proposal, Ikeda declared: "If nuclear weapons were to be used in a hostile exchange in any corner of the world, the impact – whether in terms of the number of lives lost or the number of people who would suffer aftereffects – staggers the imagination."

In fact, recent research warns of the devastating impact of even a geographically limited nuclear exchange on the global ecology; the impact on the world's climate would undermine food production, resulting in a "nuclear famine".

Explaining the motivation of the Pacific Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to turn to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), former Foreign Minister Tony de Brum said: "I have seen with my very own eyes nuclear

devastation and know with conviction that nuclear weapons must never again be visited upon humanity. Nuclear weapons are a senseless threat to survival and there are basic norms that compel those who possess them to pursue and achieve their elimination."

The RMI is home to the Bikini Atoll nuclear testing grounds. Along with Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, which suffered atomic bombings in 1945, the RMI is one among few non-nuclear-armed states in the world to see the devastation caused by nuclear weapons at close range.

The U.S. carried out 67 nuclear explosive tests between 1946 and 1958, including the infamous Castle Bravo test, which, at 15 megatons, involved the most powerful U.S. nuclear device ever to see atmospheric testing.

According to reports, the size of the Castle Bravo test on March 1, 1954 far exceeded expectations, causing widespread radioactive contamination. The fallout spread traces of radioactive material as far as Australia, India and Japan, and even the United States and parts of Europe. Though organized as a secret test, Castle Bravo quickly became an international incident, prompting calls for a ban on the atmospheric testing of thermonuclear devices.

The RMI claims that the nuclear-armed nations are in breach of nuclear disarmament obligations under existing international law. This applies to the P5 (permanent members of the UN Security Council: U.S., Russia, UK, France and China) that are signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as well as to the four non-NPT signatories (Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea) under customary international law.

Accordingly, the Marshall Islands had filed lawsuits against all nine nuclear weapons countries in April 2014. But the U.S., Russia, China, France, Israel and North Korea do not accept the "compulsory jurisdiction" of the ICJ and ignored the cases brought against them. Only India, Pakistan and UK accepted.

Prior to the start of the oral proceedings on March 8,

Pakistan, which had duly participated in the written proceedings, informed the Court that it would not participate in the hearings, because, in particular, it "[did] not feel that [such] participation [would] add anything to what ha[d] already been submitted through its Counter-Memorial" – responding to the Marshall Islands charges.

Subsequently, though only India and the United Kingdom took part in the oral public hearings, all three strongly object to the "admissibility and jurisdiction" of the ICJ in the case filed by the RMI.

UK argues that in common with the other NPT parties, it acknowledges its obligation under Article VI of the treaty and work towards disarmament. India insists that the NPT is discriminatory, de facto allowing the P5 modernize their nuclear weapons.

Phon van den Biesen, Co-Agent for the RMI and attorney at law in Amsterdam, who was leading the Marshall Islands' international Legal Team, said: "We are, basically, asking the Court to tell the respondent states (India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom) to live up to their obligations under international law."

In particular, the RMI is asking the ICJ to follow up on its earlier findings in the Advisory Opinion it delivered in 1996 on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. At the time the Court considered that the continued international debate on the legality of these deadly weapons threatens the stability of the international order.

It added that "the long-promised complete nuclear disarmament appears to be the most appropriate means" to put an end to that untenable situation. (para. 98, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/95/7495.pdf>)

The minimum the international lawyers supporting the RMI expect of the ICJ is to reiterate the ICJ's 1996 advisory opinion: "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."



Photo: Nuclear weapon test Bravo (yield 15 Mt) on Bikini Atoll. The test was part of the Operation Castle. The Bravo event was an experimental thermonuclear device surface event. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

In his 2009 five-point proposal, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also urged “all NPT parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon-states, to fulfil their obligation under the treaty to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament”.

The public hearings at the ICJ were preceded by the Open Ended Working Group’s first meeting in February 22-26 in Geneva, which did not succeed in breaking the stalemate on nuclear weapons disarmament. The next two sessions are scheduled for May and August.

Whether the 15 ICJ judges, along with judge-ad-hoc Mohammed Bedjaoui, would by then have deliberated

on jurisdiction and admissibility issues raised in the written and oral pleadings, is far from certain.

Concluding public hearings – comprising rather complicated legal aspects and profound political implications – on the question of jurisdiction, the United Nations’ principal judicial organ ICJ announced on March 16: “The Court’s judgment on the question of jurisdiction will be delivered at a public sitting, the date of which will be announced in due course.”

A close observer of the ICJ public hearings, Kazuo Ishiwatari, Vice Executive Director of the Peace and Global Issues at SGI said: “We need to raise public

awareness about nuclear weapons and the consequences of their use . . . Access to knowledge empowers people to work more effectively for a world without nuclear weapons. Ultimately, we need to see that our choice is between systems of national security premised on the suffering and sacrifice of ordinary citizens and ways of thinking and acting that prioritize human security.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – 17 March 2016]

Japan and Kazakhstan Campaign for Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty



By Ramesh Jaura

VIENNA | TOKYO (IDN) - As the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) prepares to convene a ministerial meeting in June, Kazakhstan and Japan have reaffirmed their commitment to intensify their efforts toward entry into force of the Treaty.

During the first week of the symposium 'Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security' from January 25 to February 4, representatives of the two countries in Vienna assured that they would set forth their efforts initiated by their respective foreign ministers in September 2015 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Japan's Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and his Kazakh counterpart Erlan Idrissov co-chaired the 9th

Ministerial-level Conference on Facilitating the Entry into force of the Treaty on September 29, 2015.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan reiterated in a statement issued on October 27, 2015 in Astana the reasons behind their commitment to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) becoming a law.

"As countries which experienced and are fully aware of the threat of nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan and Japan share the moral authority and responsibility to raise the awareness of the people throughout the world about the humanitarian catastrophes nuclear weapons have brought about. With this special mission in mind, Kazakhstan and Japan are determined to work together closely pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons," a joint statement said.

While the heads of two countries committed to a world free of nuclear weapons are undertaking necessary political steps, eminent Buddhist philosopher and peace-builder Daisaku Ikeda has expressed his fervent support for entry into force of the CTBT that has been in limbo for 20 years.

In his annual peace proposal, titled 'Universal Respect for Human Dignity: The Great Path to Peace', Ikeda who is president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist association, urges "the remaining eight states to ratify the CTBT as soon as possible in order to enhance its effectiveness and ensure that nuclear weapons are never again tested on our planet".

The eight countries include China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the U.S., which have signed the Treaty, and North Korea, India and Pakistan that have until now refused to put their signature on the CTBT.

Altogether 183 member states of the United Nations have signed the Treaty and 164 have ratified. But it will enter into force only when 44 countries complete their ratification procedures.

“We must of course accelerate efforts toward nuclear disarmament and abolition. At the same time, we must further develop the kind of activities that have grown from the CTBT in order to build momentum toward a world that gives highest priority to humanitarian objectives,” says the Tokyo-based SGI’s president in the proposal issued on January 26.

As the humanitarian impact and the limited military effectiveness of nuclear weapons have become more apparent, so has the fact that they are essentially unusable, says the SGI president. “Having reached the limits of military competition, we can now see signs of the emergence of a new mode of international competition, one centered around mutual striving toward humanitarian objectives.”

One example of this, adds Ikeda, can be found in the various contributions made by the International Monitoring System (IMS), which was established with the adoption of the CTBT in 1996. The CTBT has yet to enter into force, but the IMS, launched by the CTBTO Preparatory Commission to detect any nuclear explosion worldwide, is already in operation, notes Ikeda.

The IMS is an important pillar of a unique and comprehensive verification regime to make sure that no nuclear explosion goes undetected. The IMS will, when complete, consist of 337 facilities worldwide to monitor the planet for signs of nuclear explosions. Around 90 percent of the facilities are already up and running.

The SGI president lauds the IMS: “Its core function was again demonstrated in the rapid detection of the seismic waves and radiation from the recent (January 6) North Korean nuclear test. In addition, the global IMS network has been used to gather data about natural disasters and the impact of climate change.”

He adds: “Examples of this include: providing information on undersea earthquakes to tsunami early-warning centers; real-time surveillance of volcanic eruptions to enable civil aviation authorities to issue timely warnings; and tracking large-scale weather events and the

collapse of ice shelves. The system has been compared to a giant Earth stethoscope.”

Ikeda agrees with the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that even before entering into force, the CTBT is saving lives. “Indeed the Treaty and its verification regime, originally designed to restrain the nuclear arms race and nuclear proliferation, have become essential humanitarian safeguards, protecting the lives of large numbers of people,” says the Buddhist philosopher, author and peace-builder.

As CTBTO experts explained to IDN in Vienna, the global monitoring stations send gigabytes of data to the International Data Centre (IDC) at the CTBTO’s headquarters in Vienna. The data are processed and distributed to the CTBTO’s Member States in both raw and analyzed form.

Before taking up the post as the CTBTO’s Executive Secretary in August 2013, Lassina Zerbo served as the IDC Director. He has been instrumental in cementing the CTBTO’s position as the world’s centre of excellence for nuclear test-ban verification, as well as in driving forward efforts towards the entry into force and universalization of the CTBT.

Ikeda also *offers proposals for the new Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) set up by the UN General Assembly to address concrete legal measures toward prohibition of nuclear weapons. The Group is preparing substantive sessions to work on the legal measures and norms to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. It will also make recommendations on interim nuclear risk-reduction measures.*

85 countries and some civil society organizations participated in an informal session of the OEWG on January 28. Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi of Thailand was named as the OEWG Chair, and a provisional OEWG agenda was distributed.

It envisages (a) concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons; and (b) recommendations on other measures that could contribute to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including but not limited to: Transparency measures related to the risks associated with existing nuclear weapons; measures to reduce and

eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear weapon detonations; and additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the complexity of and interrelationship between the wide range of humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear detonation.

According to UNFOLD ZERO, support for the OEWG is also growing in parliaments and amongst civil society globally. UNFOLD ZERO is a new platform for United Nations focused initiatives and actions for the achievement of a nuclear weapons free world.

Mayors for Peace, an organization of over 6,800 cities, has sent an open letter to the OEWG urging all States – especially those possessing nuclear weapons and their umbrella states – to engage in constructive deliberations in the OEWG in order to pave the way for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

People for Nuclear Disarmament and the Human Survival Project have sent a Memo to Governments Participating in the OEWG highlighting the humanitarian and security imperative to immediately reduce nuclear risks and to take concurrent steps to prohibit and eliminate the weapons. The memo explores various options to abolish nuclear weapons, including a nuclear weapons convention, ban treaty and/or a 'building blocks' approach.

According to the Memo, it is possible that no one, single, approach will do the trick, and that momentum built up by one approach may facilitate progress with another, different approach.

Ikeda also cites hopeful developments, including the fact that over 120 states have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge, a commitment to “stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons,” and growing calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons from civil society. He highlights efforts involving faith-based organizations and youth that the SGI has supported, including the International Youth Summit for Nuclear Abolition held in Hiroshima in August 2015.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 1 February 2016]

Photo: Panel discussion on Roles, Responsibilities and Challenges Maintaining the IMS Verification System
Credit: CTBTO

New Study Says Next Generation Remains Oblivious To Nuclear Dangers

By Rodney Reynolds

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – For over 70 years since the disastrous bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, peace activists have continued their relentless global campaign for a world without nuclear weapons.

The United Nations, which has remained engaged in a longstanding debate, continues to adopt scores of resolutions every year on nuclear disarmament.

And in December, not surprisingly, the 193-member General Assembly wrapped up its 2015 sessions adopting 57 draft resolutions on arms control and disarmament – 23 of which were on nuclear weapons.

Still the goal of a nuclear-free world is a distance political mirage – at least for the present generation.

A new study released last week by the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), a Washington-based think tank, has attempted to reframe the narrative on nuclear weapons.

How is nuclear disarmament being viewed by the next generation of policy makers who will inherit thousands of nuclear weapons – particularly when the policy on nuclear weapons is all-too-often constrained by the legacy of past generations?

The study, which sums up the findings from a 14-month long project, is expected “to serve as a point of departure in developing innovative ideas and engaging more people within the next generation of policy shapers in the interests of furthering nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.”

“Innovative thinking is needed to overcome deeply entrenched attitudes and slow progress in the shared responsibility to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation measures and achieve global security through nuclear disarmament,” the Report argues.

The project explored three questions: First, what are



the biggest influences in the cycle of nuclear weapons decision-making and where might we be able to shift the conversation?

Second, where and how might the nuclear debate be more closely integrated with other policy issues and movements that attract attention?

Third, how and why might nuclear weapons issues resonate more strongly with emerging policy makers, the public and media?

The study was the result of a series of workshops in the U.S. and UK with next generation participants aimed at mapping the challenges, mechanisms for engagement, potential new dimensions in the debate and its relationship to other issues, including the relationships between nuclear weapons and climate change.

When the issue comes out in the public, it rarely involves considered arguments, but rather features as a shallow, symbolic proxy to label particular positions as naïve or hawkish.

The study calls for new voices into the discussion, and test out the means to inspire the next generation of policy makers.

Tariq Rauf, Director, Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN the BASIC Report highlights how thinking and discourse on nuclear weapons have morphed into the mundane over the years, and has fallen off the list of principal dangers to the world.

Driven by the need to go beyond the deeply entrenched attitudes and stasis in achieving global security through nuclear disarmament, the Report was motivated by trying to make future nuclear weapons policy more relevant to the security and concerns of the next generation that will inherit thousands of

nuclear weapons and thousands of tonnes of nuclear weapon-usable materials, he noted.

Rauf said one significant finding of the Report is that the younger people in the UK and the U.S. are not overly concerned by the nuclear weapons of their respective countries, but are worried about further nuclear proliferation and to terrorist groups.

“This new generation is blissfully unaware and thus unconcerned about nuclear weapon arsenals – as nuclear weapons have no relevance to their make-believe worlds of Twitter or Facebook – but they will be in for a rude awakening, should unfortunately, a nuclear detonation occur whether by accident or by non-State actor actions,” said Rauf, a former Senior Adviser to the chair of the 2014 Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

He also pointed out that whatever little discourse there is on nuclear weapons in the mainstream media, is driven by fear mongering about adversaries but ignores the nuclear weapons, policies and spending at home.

An important recommendation of the Report is to bring education and information about nuclear weapons early in the education of youngsters, starting in school, he added.

In this regard, said Rauf, it is useful to pay attention to the views of those with firsthand experience with nuclear weapons policy, such as William J. Perry, former US Defence Secretary, as recounted in his recent memoir, “My Journey at the Nuclear Brink”, and movies such as “Dr Strangelove”, “Fail Safe” and “The Man Who Saved the World”.

“The BASIC Report is an important contribution to finding ways to engage the new generation on issues of nuclear weapons and existential global security,” said Rauf, a former head (2002-2011) of the Verification and

Security Policy Coordination Office at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

The methods used in the BASIC project included the participation of focus groups; roundtable events and expert dialogues; polling of European youth aged 14-30 about their attitudes towards nuclear weapons; digital engagement; and face-to-face networking with members of the next generation.

Some of the important findings of the study include: nuclear weapons are not seen as strongly relevant to the (U.S./UK) next generation – except in terms of an uncertain future caused by the leakage of nuclear weapons to revisionist states and non-state actors.

“Not only are they out of sight and mind, divorced from human interest stories, difficult to relate to every-day experience but also they are not seen as particularly influential even in the political and military spheres.”

When previous generations would have attached great utility and fear to these weapons -- establishing elaborate deterrence relationships based on fear -- the next generation sees them as largely irrelevant to outcomes, the study concludes.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 19 January 2016]

Image credit: BASIC

Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons High on UN Agenda in 2016

By Jamshed Baruah

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) - An open-ended working group of the United Nations General Assembly for achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world is, along with the Sustainable Development Goals, an important agenda item that the year 2015 has bequeathed to 2016.

The General Assembly also adopted a number of other important resolutions: 139 nations pledged “to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons”. 144 countries declared that it was in the interests of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again “under any circumstances”. 132 states described nuclear weapons as “inherently immoral”.

The General Assembly voted on December 7 to set up a working group that will draft “legal measures, legal provisions and norms” for achieving a world without nuclear weapons. This new UN body – which has the backing of 138 nations – is widely expected to focus its efforts on devising the elements for a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons outright.

The creation of a working group was recommended in the draft final document from the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference that ended on May 22, 2015. As the Arms Control Association pointed out, the proposal grew out of the frustration of many states with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament.

According to the NPT document, the purpose of the working group would be “to identify effective measures for the full implementation of Article VI” of the NPT, “including legal provisions or other arrangements,” and to do so on the basis of consensus. Under Article VI, the treaty parties are to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament”.

According to the UN, the working group shall also “substantively address recommendations on other measures that could contribute to taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, including but not limited to:

“(a) Transparency measures related to the risks associated with existing nuclear weapons;

“(b) Measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear weapon detonations; and

“(c) Additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the complexity of and interrelationship between the wide range of humanitarian consequences that would result from any nuclear detonation.”

Dates have yet to be set. But the working group will meet in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2016 for up to 15 days. In the interests of achieving real progress, the working group will not be bound by strict consensus rules. It will submit a report to the General Assembly next October on its substantive work and agreed recommendations.

International organizations and civil society organizations, including the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) are also invited to participate. “It is time to begin the serious practical work of developing the elements for a treaty banning nuclear weapons,” said Beatrice Fihn, executive director of ICAN. “The overwhelming majority of nations support this course of action.”

The Mexican-sponsored resolution that set up the working group acknowledges in preamble to the resolution “the absence of concrete outcomes of multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations within the UN framework for almost two decades”. It adds that the “current international climate” – of increased tensions among nuclear-armed nations – made the elimination of nuclear weapons “all the more urgent”.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who comprise the nine nuclear-armed nations – China, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and France – are opposed to the creation of the working group.

They issued a joint statement in November explaining their view. “An instrument such as a ban” would “undermine the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty)

regime”, they argued, but did not explain how, said ICAN.

They could have supported an “appropriately mandated” working group bound by strict consensus rules, they said. However, such an arrangement would have allowed them, collectively or individually, to block all proposed actions and decisions, including the appointment of a chair and adoption of an agenda. The Mexican approach of giving greater control to nuclear-free nations is “divisive”, they criticized.

Among the countries that abstained from voting on the resolution was Germany, which hosts U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory, stating that the working group is not “inclusive” – in spite of the fact that the UN encourages participation of all nations. Japan and Australia, which believe it is acceptable to use nuclear weapons in certain circumstances, also abstained, offering vague explanations.

India and Pakistan, which reportedly possess nuclear weapons, argued that the working group would threaten the Conference on Disarmament (CD) – a Geneva-based forum established in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, as a result of the first Special Session on Disarmament of the United Nations General Assembly in 1978.

The CD, which has been stuck up for nearly two decades, excludes two-thirds of the world’s nations from its deliberations (mostly developing nations). It will hold the first of three sessions in 2016 from January 25 to April 1, 2016.

According to ICAN, the UN General Assembly’s vote on a resolution setting up a working group comes in the aftermath of the success of the three major conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in 2013 and 2014.

“These have resulted in a growing expectation among governments and civil society that negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons should now begin. The failure of the NPT review conference this May further



underscored the need for real action,” commented ICAN.

“We cannot delay indefinitely the prohibition of a weapon that is patently unacceptable on humanitarian grounds,” said ICAN’s Fihn. “We expect that certain

nations will continue to oppose this course of action. But that must not prevent us from moving forward. We have outlawed other indiscriminate, inhumane weapons. Now we must outlaw the very worst weapons of all.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – 28 December 2015]
Image: UN Office Geneva

World's Major Powers, in 'Shameful Behaviour', Opt out of Nuclear Resolution



By Rodney Reynolds

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – When the world's major nuclear powers express their support for nuclear disarmament, their political rhetoric usually fails to match their actions – even as they continue to modernize their arsenals. Undeterred, the UN's Committee on Disarmament and International Security (also known as the First Committee) traditionally adopts a cluster of over 15-20 resolutions every year – mostly on arms control and nuclear disarmament.

This year there was one significant exception: the U.S., Britain and France, three of the world's major nuclear powers, opted to abstain on a resolution, spearheaded by Japan every year, on united action towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. All three countries voted in favour of the resolution last year, with U.S. and Britain as co-sponsors. But this year both countries were missing in action – much to the disappointment of Japan, a key Western ally.

The speculation at the UN is that the abstentions were triggered largely by the fact that the resolution included the term *hibakushas*, or survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 70 years ago, underlying the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

The resolution was adopted on November 2 by a vote of 156 to 3, with 17 abstentions.

The three negative votes came from Russia and China, the other two major nuclear powers, plus North Korea.

Dr M.V. Ramana, a physicist and lecturer at Princeton University's Programme on Science and Global Security and the Nuclear Futures Laboratory, said: "I think this is shameful behavior on the part of the nuclear weapon states, if they cannot even support a resolution calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons because it mentions the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapon use."

The horrendous effects of a nuclear explosion are well known, and the reluctance of the nuclear weapon states to countenance that reality can only mean that they have dealt so long with nuclear weapons in the abstract that any discussion of what these weapons do is unpalatable to them, he added.

"Military planners and diplomats must be constantly reminded by civil society and activists that what they are dealing with are instruments of mass murder," said Dr Ramana, author of *The Power of Promise: Examining Nuclear Energy in India* and a former member of the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and the International Panel on Fissile Materials.

The U.S. abstention was also a surprise considering President Barack Obama's call for a nuclear weapons-free world, in a historic speech he made in Prague in 2009.

Speaking from Nagasaki, where she has been attending meetings of Pugwash scientists and religious leaders, Dr Rebecca Johnson, a nuclear analyst on the steering group of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) said: "Japan is caught between a rock and a hard place."

This result shows the perils of the Japanese government trying to bridge between incompatible positions, when what is necessary is a decision on where to stand and commit to nuclear disarmament, she noted.

Rock, stuck in the 20th century

The U.S. is at present a rock, stuck in the 20th century, with its continuing dependence on maintaining and modernizing nuclear arsenals. So Japan cannot please Washington unless it reduces its position to empty rhetoric, she added.

In this situation, said Dr Johnson, the Abe government should stand with the Hibakusha and the Japanese people, who are in the hard place of advocating the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons.

"Seventy years after atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japanese people are tired of hearing their government try to bridge the difference between nuclear disarmament and nuclear modernization by uttering sentimental platitudes and relying on the U.S. to use nuclear weapons in Japan's name, which is what the nuclear alliance requires."

Dr Johnson also said Japan can be commended for

supporting resolutions raising concern about humanitarian consequences.

Now that Mexico's resolution for an Open-ended working group next year has been overwhelmingly adopted by the First Committee, Japan should engage constructively to "substantively address effective legal measures".

The Hibakusha and Japanese people will expect their government to stop pandering to the P5 (in the UN Security Council) who want to keep nuclear weapons, and to work for a legally binding instrument to prohibit the use, deployment and possession of nuclear weapons, and require their total elimination," declared Dr Johnson.

Bob Rigg, a former chair of the New Zealand Consultative Committee on Disarmament, who writes on chemical and nuclear weapons-related issues and on U.S. foreign policy, said although Japan was the victim of two devastating U.S. atomic attacks at the end of World War II, subsequent conservative Japanese governments have, ironically enough, tried to benefit strategically from the American nuclear umbrella by playing down this issue.

In return for this, he said, the Washington has been only too willing to support bland Japanese resolutions paying lip service to nuclear disarmament in very general terms.

The decision of the U.S., the UK, and France to abstain from Japan's First Committee resolution can only be attributed to their disquiet with the growing wave of international impatience with their implacable opposition to anything that could even be interpreted as a

tentative commitment to practical steps towards nuclear disarmament, said Rigg.

"Although Russia and China frequently allow the U.S. to take the flak for not supporting disarmament, on this occasion they came out of the closet and voted against the Japanese resolution."

All nuclear possessors have the bomb, and are hell-bent on hanging on to it. The non-possessors can neither persuade nor force the possessors to disarm, said Rigg, a former senior editor with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

He said President Obama's Prague speech of April 2009 was over-hyped by international media and quietly ignored by the U.S. military/industrial establishment.

"The very same Obama collapsed like a pricked balloon, and is now increasing expenditure on upgrading the U.S. nuclear arsenal, to improve its strike capability."

In the current run up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, he pointed out, not a single candidate has dared to advocate reduced military expenditure, let alone steps towards nuclear disarmament.

"The UN Conference on Disarmament and the UN First Committee have degenerated into graveyards where the hopes of the people of Japan, who are not represented by their own government, and of a war-weary world are buried beneath mountains of repetitive, redundant resolutions, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

[IDN-InDepthNews – 08 November 2015]

Photo: UN First Committee

Nuclear-Weapons-Free Africa Keen To Harness Atomic Energy

By Jeffrey Moyo

HARARE (IDN) - Nuclear disarmament is a non-issue in Southern Africa. Because no African country possesses nuclear weapons. In fact the 38-nation African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (ANWFZ) Treaty, also known as the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed in 1996, established a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Africa. The treaty came into effect on July 15, 2009.

According to experts, rather than focussing on nuclear weapons, energy should be expended on seeing how the region may utilise nuclear power amidst rampant electricity deficits that have seen most of the countries in the region thrown in incessant darkness.

The experts' focus on electricity availability here coincides with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 7 to "ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all".

"Countries in the Sub-Saharan region must be permitted to utilise nuclear energy as this may be an answer to electricity shortfalls here, however taking into cognisance the long-term effects of nuclear waste that endangers human life," Hapison Chikova, an independent environmentalist and nuclear energy expert based in the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, told IDN.

Nuclear waste is radioactive and an extremely toxic by-product of nuclear fuel processing plants, nuclear medicine and nuclear weapons industries. Nuclear wastes remain radioactive for thousands of years and have to be buried deep on land or at sea in thick concrete or lead and stainless metal containers.

Despite the hazards associated with nuclear energy, hard-hit with power woes, even ordinary people in this region agree with many experts like Chikova.

"I personally don't care where electricity would come from even if authorities would harness it from nuclear energy, which many fear is often used in manufacturing



dangerous war weapons, but with the layman's knowledge that I have about nuclear energy, it is cheaper if it can be used to generate electricity," Mevion Chimedza, a resident in Highfield, a high density suburb in Harare, the Zimbabwean capital, told IDN.

But to climate experts here, emphasis on civilian instead of military use of nuclear power in this part of Africa is an answer to dire climate change effects.

"It will help in the mitigation of climate change impacts and improve agriculture production here, but if it's a low investment, nuclear should be adopted to help generate electricity, which in this case means with the nuclear activity, we will be able to mechanise our production methods including agriculture," Zisunko Ndlovu, an independent climate change expert in Zimbabwe, told IDN.

These views are being expressed against the backdrop that, despite raging debate about nuclear disarmament in the world's military strongholds, no African country here possesses nuclear weapons to this day.

This in spite of the fact that, according to the Arms Control Association, the world's nine nuclear armed states possess a combined total of roughly 16,000 nuclear warheads, more than 90 per cent belong to Russia and the United States.

Along with China, France and UK, they constitute the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and are also known as the "nuclear-weapon states" under the terms of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In addition, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea are known to be armed with nuclear weapons.

In Southern Africa, only South Africa has at one time possessed nuclear weapons. It became the first nation in the world to voluntarily give up all nuclear arms it had developed before the anticipated changeover to a majority-elected African National Congress government in the 1990s.

The country has been a signatory of the Biological Weapons Convention since 1975, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons since 1991, and the Chemical Weapons Convention since 1995.

“As citizens of South Africa, we are mindful of the South African Government's voluntary and unilateral relinquishing of a nuclear weapons capability in the 1990s,” Mike Kantey, former Chairman of the Coalition Against Nuclear Energy from 2007-2014 and now Director of the Watercourse Media and Development Company, told IDN.

Based on views from anti-nuclear activists and experts like Kantey, countries in this region, particularly South Africa, are aware of the hazards of nuclear energy.

Meeting with *hibakusha*

“As anti-nuclear activists and veterans of the Anti-Apartheid struggle, we were privileged to have hosted a delegation from the city of Hiroshima at the beginning of the 21st Century, where we heard an eyewitness account from one of the *hibakusha*, or survivors of that nuclear holocaust,” added Kantey.

According to Kantey, on that occasion, the Japanese delegation was actively campaigning for the universal nuclear disarmament and was asking South Africans to help in lobbying for an end to nuclear proliferation in South Asia, in the Middle East and in North Korea.

“From a unilateral pledge on the part of the State of Israel and the declaration of a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Free Zone in the Middle East, we believe that a greater pressure may be placed on South Asia to do the same, and so lead to a final commitment of the Big Five – China, France, Russia, the United

Kingdom, and the United States – to commit equally to the global elimination of all nuclear weapons and depleted uranium ordnance,” said Kantey.

But back to Zimbabwe, in 2012 amid widespread belief that the Southern African nation possessed vast untapped deposits of uranium, *critical* for both civil nuclear power generation and military nuclear weapons, the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority chief executive officer Josh Chifamba has been on record saying a team of experts here would soon be assembled to look into the feasibility of such a venture in a move likely to attract international attention.

“We will set up a small group to look at the nuclear option. We are looking at the year 2020 and onwards for full-scale nuclear power production,” Chifamba told an International Business Conference in Bulawayo last year (2014).

Zimbabwe possesses unexploited uranium deposits in the Zambezi valley while it is also estimated that Kanyemba Mine in the Zambezi valley holds more than 45,000 tonnes of uranium ore with over 20,000 tonnes extractable.

Iran and China are reported to have expressed a keen interest in Zimbabwe's uranium deposits, this despite the UN having imposed fresh sanctions on Iran in 2013 after the country refused to halt its uranium enrichment programme.

Apparently eager to harness energy from the atom, the Zimbabwean government seems unperturbed by the dangers nuclear may pose environmentally.

In 2013, Foreign Affairs minister Simbarashe Mumbengegwi told an Iranian news agency that Zimbabwe was willing to work with Iran on extracting uranium resources meant for Tehran's controversial nuclear programme.

Like Zimbabwe, Namibia sees hope to end its energy deficits through nuclear energy.

Last year (2014) the Namibian government anticipated constructing a nuclear power plant simulator in future

to train its citizens on the use of nuclear power, as confirmed by the country's Mines and Energy Minister Isak Katali then.

“We are currently producing uranium, and exporting it raw. Nuclear electricity is cheap and safe,” Katali told reporters then.

Meanwhile, South Africa is the only country in Africa with a commercial nuclear power plant made up of two reactors accounting for around 4 percent of that country's electricity generation. In fact the South African government has been on record indicating it would encourage a great deal of localisation in the construction and fabrication of nuclear facilities.

This, however, has unsettled nuclear energy experts here.

“South Africa will experience huge quantities of nuclear waste and reactor decommissioning that may become as expensive as construction itself,” Tony Huffing, an independent nuclear energy expert based in South Africa, told IDN.

But last year, South Africa launched the National Radioactive Waste Disposal Institute to assume responsibility for the management and disposal of country's radioactive waste.

For many nuclear experts like Zimbabwe's Chikova, with no single country possessing nuclear weapons in Africa, the challenge may not be that of a world free of nuclear weapons.

“There are no nuclear weapons to talk about here in this part of Africa and we need not waste time talking about nuclear disarmament, but rather invest our energies in harnessing nuclear energy without posing harm to the region's environment,” Chikova said.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 30 October 2015]

Photo: High-level Panel on Blix Commission's Report Weapons of Terror meeting on October 21 at UN in New York. UN Photo/Loey Felipe

UN Plans New Working Groups Aimed at Nuclear Disarmament

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - Against the backdrop of a potential military confrontation between the world's two major nuclear powers – the United States and Russia – the United Nations is taking a significant step towards a hitherto impossible goal: nuclear disarmament.

The 193-member General Assembly, through its Committee on Disarmament and International Security (also known as the First Committee), is expected to establish an open-ended working group — or possibly two such groups — to deliberate or negotiate on effective measures for nuclear disarmament.

One of the draft resolutions, currently in circulation, calls for the Working Group to convene in Geneva in 2016, as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and under its rules of procedure.

The Working Group is expected to submit a report, reflecting the negotiations and its recommendations, to the General Assembly at its 71st session in September next year.

This draft resolution, sponsored by Mexico, has several co-sponsors, including Austria, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ghana, Liechtenstein, Ireland, Malta, Nigeria, the Philippines and South Africa.

A second draft resolution, sponsored by Iran, calls on a second Working Group to transmit its report to the U.N.'s high level international conference on nuclear disarmament to be held no later than 2018, and to the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission.

John Burroughs, Executive Director of the New York-based Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, told IPS: "The relevant resolutions are still under negotiation."

This development, he said, builds on the momentum created by the 2013 open-ended working group to develop proposals for multilateral negotiations; the

2013 and 2014 conferences on humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons in Oslo, Nayarit, and Vienna; and the draft final document of the May 2015 NPT Review Conference.

"Regardless of the short-term output of a new working group, its operation would definitely be positive because it would keep the momentum going and create an opening for further steps."

The United States, he pointed out, has shifted its position from its opposition to the 2013 working group, saying that it would support a new working group, though it insists on a consensus procedure and says that a working group should explore all effective measures (e.g. verification) for nuclear disarmament, not negotiate legal measures.

Which other members of the Permanent Five — including Britain, France, China and Russia — will come out, remains to be seen, he added.

"But the U.S. shift is a sign that the environment is changing for the better," said Burroughs, who is also Director of the U.N. Office of International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms.

Jackie Cabasso, executive director of the Western States Legal Foundation, one of the strongest advocates of nuclear disarmament, told IPS that all resolutions forwarded from the Committee on Disarmament and International Security are overwhelmingly adopted each year by the General Assembly, which is not bound by consensus.

This year, she pointed out, the General Assembly is expected to establish an open ended working group (open to all 193 member states) to take forward proposals to implement nuclear disarmament.

She said a statement made Oct.16 by a coalition of over 135 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from 19 countries has an unequivocal message: "We call on (member) states to stop fiddling while Rome burns."

In a statement endorsed by the 135 organizations,

Cabasso told the First Committee the nuclear-armed countries are edging ever closer to direct military confrontation in conflict zones around the world, from Ukraine to Syria and the broader Middle East to the Western Pacific.

"The danger of nuclear war is growing again on a scale measured in months or years," she said.

And those who rule in the nuclear-armed states appear comfortable approaching disarmament on a time scale measured in generations — and show no interest in taking up the task again anytime soon.

The coalition that endorsed the statement includes Global Action to Prevent War, International Peace Bureau, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Soka Gakkai International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Project Ploughshares, International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, Israeli Disarmament Movement, Swedish Peace Council, Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, CODE PINK, Western States Legal Foundation and Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, among others.

Aaron Tovish, International Director, 2020 Vision Campaign, and Mayors for Peace, told IPS: "Given the ongoing abuse of the consensus rule in the Conference on Disarmament, already back in 2006, Mayors for Peace began promoting the creation of a working group that would operate under U.N. General Assembly rules of Procedure."

He said the 2013 Open-Ended Working Group on 'Taking Forward Multilateral Negotiations on Nuclear Disarmament' was a successful, albeit too short, exercise.

"It is most timely to revive the Working Group with a stronger mandate."

"I see nothing wrong with having working groups being held in both Geneva and New York next year. Each venue has strengths and weaknesses, so those

prepared to work for nuclear disarmament in good faith, should be willing to contribute to both venues” he added.

Tovish also said: “We are just at the beginning of getting full-fledged negotiations (on establishing a Nuclear Weapons-Free World) underway, so it is too early to be prejudging which way forward will be most productive. It is conceivable that a good division of labour could be agreed upon for two (or more) forums.”

In her statement, prepared by Andrew Lichterman on behalf of the coalition, Cabasso said: “No amount of tinkering with the disarmament machinery can turn it into a vehicle for disarmament progress when those in the driver’s seat have no intention of moving forward.”

She said the new round of conflicts and confrontations, and the resumption of arms racing, are driven by those who have the power to shape policy in the nuclear-armed states.

“Primary responsibility for the continued scourge of industrialized warfare world-wide lies with the military-industrial complexes and national security state elites at the apex of the global war system, and those in the United States above all.”

Cabasso said nuclear-armed states account for three quarters of global arms exports; the United States and Russia together for over half.

They provide the kinds of weapons that turn local, low-intensity conflicts into industrial-scale wars that fragment societies, destroy vital infrastructure, and destabilize entire regions.

She said these human catastrophes are used to justify competing armed interventions that raise the stakes even higher, with nuclear-armed militaries operating in close quarters in proxy confrontations that easily could spiral out of control.

A small fraction of humanity benefits in the short run from these high stakes competitions; all of us bear the risk, she declared.

(IPS | 28 October 2015)

Photo: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (front row, centre right) poses for a group photo with this year’s participants of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme. On his right is Kim Won-soo, Acting UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Credit: UN Photo/Evan Schneider



Australia Under Heavy Criticism For Nuclear Agreement with India

By Neena Bhandari

SYDNEY (IDN) - Though the Australian Parliament has not yet ratified the Australia-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement signed in 2014, civil society, environment and disarmament advocates caution that sale of uranium to India would fuel a nuclear arms race in the region and undermine Australia's strong credentials as an exponent of nuclear safeguards policies.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia has expressed grave concerns regarding the weak safeguards in the Agreement, the poor safety record at Indian nuclear facilities, and the implications of the Agreement for the nuclear non-proliferation regime. *This is the first time the Australian Government would be selling uranium to a country that is not a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).*

"Nuclear commerce with India on arguably less stringent terms than those applied to NPT signatories compliant with their NPT non-proliferation obligations undermines the purpose, credibility and value of the NPT. The deal with India, which (also) contravenes Australia's obligations under the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, cements Australia as part of the problem of nuclear danger rather than part of the solution," says Dr Tilman A Ruff, Founding Chair of ICAN Australia.

Article IV of the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty (SPNFZ), which entered into force on December 11, 1986, obliges signatories to not supply equipment or material to countries – like India – which are not under full scope safeguards.

Signatories to the Treaty are apart from Australia: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Of the five nuclear-weapon states, France and the Britain have ratified all three protocols while Russia and China have only ratified Protocols II and III. U.S. ratification of all three protocols is pending.

Warning that Australian uranium will further fuel the nuclear arms race in the region, Dr Ruff says, this would happen "either indirectly, by expanding the pool of uranium available, which from domestic sources is insufficient for both India's military and nuclear power plans; or directly".

"The enmeshment of India's military and civilian operations, the lack of an effective independent nuclear regulatory agency, the extremely limited application of safeguards which can be varied by India at any time, and the substantial limitations of the safeguards themselves contribute to these risks," he adds.

He says that India's use of a reactor provided by Canada and fuel provided by the U.S to produce the plutonium for its first nuclear explosion in 1974 breached assurances that both would be utilised only for peaceful purposes.

"Meanwhile, Pakistan's response to the opening up of international nuclear commerce with India has been as alarming as it has been predictable – ramping up its production of fissile materials, and expanding its nuclear arsenal, at a rate currently faster than any other nation", Dr Ruff, who is also Co-President of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), told IDN.

IPPNW was awarded 1985 Nobel Peace Prize for performing "a considerable service to mankind by spreading authoritative information and by creating an awareness of the catastrophic consequences of atomic warfare".

Signing NPT a precondition

Negotiations for the sale of uranium to India began in 2006 and an agreement was reached in 2014. In its Australia-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement report tabled on September 8, 2015, the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT) recommended that the Agreement be ratified, but the regulation of nuclear safety and security at Indian nuclear facilities be addressed before the sale of uranium takes place. It called on Australia to commit diplomatic resources to

encourage India to make genuine disarmament advances, such as signing the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) wants Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to be mindful of the serious concerns associated with this planned action and respect the highly cautionary approach outlined in the JSCOT report and recommendations.

"We hold deep concerns that the Australia-India uranium deal will increase risk, especially with India's nuclear industry the subject of continuing and unresolved safety problems and regulatory deficiencies. In 2012 the Indian Auditor General had released a damning report warning of 'a Fukushima or Chernobyl-like disaster if the nuclear safety issue is not addressed'. The concerns highlighted in this report, including lax regulation, poor governance and a deficient safety culture, remain largely unaddressed," ACF's Nuclear Free Campaigner, Dave Sweeney, told IDN.

So is there a real danger that Australian uranium will free up India's existing uranium stockpiles to be used in its nuclear weapons programme? Sweeney says, "Increasingly likely. India is actively expanding its nuclear arsenal and weapons capabilities through increased uranium enrichment capacity, increased attention to multiple weapons launch platforms and advanced work on improved submarine launch capabilities. The proposed treaty action places no practical, political or perception barrier to any of these activities. Instead it effectively gives a green light to India's nuclear weapons ambitions. Such a cavalier approach is not in the best interests of Australia or the region."

Australia has 40 per cent of the world's uranium reserves and it is a significant uranium exporter. A significant portion of Australia's uranium has been sourced over three decades from Mirarr land in the Northern Territory.

Aboriginals caution

The representative organisation of the Mirarr people, the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation's Chief Executive Officer Justin O'Brien says, "Traditional Owners

have long held concerns regarding the impacts of uranium once it is exported and its potential to be used in nuclear weapons. The Mirarr are worried by the lack of enforceable safeguards to ensure uranium intended for nuclear power is not diverted to nuclear weapons and these appear to be even weaker than usual in this proposed Agreement.”

For Australia, the uranium deal could increase exports and employment opportunities. The deal could bring in an extra 1.75 billion Australian dollars (about 1.27 billion U.S. dollars) worth of exports to the economy and create up to 4,000 jobs.

Friends of the Earth Australia National nuclear campaigner Jim Green, however, expresses doubts. “Uranium sales to India will do very little or nothing to boost Australia's export revenue or employment in remote and Indigenous communities. Uranium sales to India would boost Australia's uranium revenue by a negligible 3 percent and create just a few dozen jobs.”

For India, the uranium sale deal could help the emerging economic power meet its energy needs. But as Dr Sue Wareham, Vice-President, Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia)says, “Nuclear power cannot address the issue of climate change. Even if there is further development of nuclear power, it will be far too slow because it takes 10 to 15 years to get a nuclear power plant at a point of producing electricity. Particularly important also is the link with weapons. We know there are definite links between the civilian and military fuel cycles, and that is a particular problem that will remain as long as nuclear power is there”.

Nuclear energy's share of global commercial electricity generation has remained almost stable (-0.2 percent) in 2013 compared to the previous year, but declined from a peak of 17.6 percent in 1996 to 10.8 percent, according to the World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2014.

She points out that there is also the problem of nuclear waste. “The technological and practical reality



is that we don't have any way of reliably and permanently separating nuclear waste from the environment. The world really needs to put serious and significant funding into further promotion, development and implementation of renewable energies – solar, wind, geothermal and biofuels, which have been underused and under-resourced”, Dr Wareham told IDN.

A detailed report by WWF-India and TERI - The Energy and Resources Institute had mapped out how India could generate as much as 90 percent of total primary energy from renewables by 2050.

Australia is in an interesting situation because as a

country it doesn't have any nuclear weapons, but subscribes to the doctrine of extended nuclear deterrence under the U.S. alliance.

ICAN is calling on the Australian Government to support a diplomatic process to negotiate a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons as the best next step towards achieving their complete elimination.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 26 October 2015]

Photo: Ranger Uranium Mine in Kakadu National Park, east of Darwin, Australia.

Credit: Stephen Codrington – Wikimedia Commons

Saudi Nuclear Blustering Remains Hollow – for Now



By Emad Mekay*

CAIRO (IDN) - When the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal was announced in July, the image in state-controlled Saudi media was of Western powers caving in to a new powerful neighboring foe. The usually reticent Saudi officials paid the usual diplomatic lip-service to the agreement but social media, academia and state-owned news outlet all portrayed a different picture; profound Saudi anxiety that included statements that the oil-rich country can use its wealth to go nuclear.

“The kingdom can only look to itself to protect its people, even if it means implementing a nuclear program,” wrote Nawaf Obaid, Senior Fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies. A nuclear Iran, he said, “represents a state of extreme danger to multiple nations, but few more so than Saudi Arabia, which has long been Iran’s primary opponent in the Middle East power balance.”

Ironically, the deal that alarmed the Saudis was designed to produce a different result. The framework

would in fact gradually lift sanctions on Tehran for its agreement to cut back its stockpile of low-enriched uranium by 98 percent for 15 years and reducing its installed centrifuges. Yet, Saudi Arabia and other regional Gulf Arab allies saw the deal as nothing short of a dramatic shift of the balance of regional power.

Iran can use new streams of revenue to improve its conventional armament and expand its regional influence without losing any of its scientific, technological or nuclear edge over its over-indulgent wealthy Arab neighbors. After all, Arab capitals have long blindly trusted U.S. guarantees of Gulf security to the point where they neglected investment in scientific development and relied heavily on massive arms purchases from the U.S. that sat to collect dust in storage houses.

Iran's unprecedented projection of military power and influence in neighboring Iraq and Syria along with Iranian backing of Yemeni Houthi rebels only vexed the Saudis more. Little wonder more Saudi pundits are screaming at the top of their voice they can and will go nuclear. To seal it all, the Obama administration appears to them as if Washington is renegading on its security pledges.

“I think the Obama Administration has done a terrible job of creating a regional security strategy,” said Jeffrey Lewis, professor at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. “It is not surprising that allies and partners would be expressing discomfort with what they see as strategic drift. Most Saudis are alarmed at the deterioration in regional security and believe that the Obama Administration is inept.”

“I am reluctant to conclude that the current unease is permanent until we see how the next Administration

handles the regional and bilateral relationship,” he added.

For Middle East experts, the Saudis rarely vent their frustration publicly preferring to work behind the scene or clandestinely. But this time the Saudi media responded to the deal with stories upon stories describing Saudi Arabia's missile forces in striking detail as well as its nuclear ambitions.

Nuclear programme

Riyadh already has a nuclear programme. In 2011, it announced plans for the construction of sixteen nuclear power reactors over the next twenty years at a cost of more than 80 billion dollars. These would generate about 20 percent of Saudi Arabia's electricity, while other, smaller reactors were envisaged for desalination.

Recently, the French and the Saudis announced feasibility studies to secure contracts for two nuclear reactor facilities to be built by Areva, a French company. Deals with Hungary, Russia, Argentina and China are in the pipeline towards building reactors costing around 2 billion dollars each.

The King Abdullah Atomic Energy City (KACARE) has taken most matters into hand and it is said to be manned by young researchers imbued with an ideology that sees Iran as the ultimate threat to their nation's existence.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is in close cooperation with Riyadh in developing a peaceful nuclear power programme and cancer treatment facilities at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center.

But despite the newly-found motivation and initial endeavour, many Middle East experts agree that Saudi officials can wish all they want but they really cannot build a nuclear weapon. All they are doing is just dabbling in early nuclear energy research and making “noise”.

“So far that noise has not translated to anything concrete above and beyond talk, sometimes a loud talk,” said Avner Cohen, a researcher with the James

Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

Other obstacles remain before a Saudi nuclear programme. Saudi Arabia controls 16 percent of the world's known oil reserves yet it remains an authoritarian developing nation that lacks the educational and technological skills to develop nuclear warheads or ballistic missile technology.

The Al-Saud family-run regime has long preferred to spend on the welfare state and pamper its citizens with luxury items rather than on developing profound scientific or personal skills.

“Saudi Arabia possesses only a rudimentary civil nuclear infrastructure, and currently lacks the physical and technological resources to develop an indigenous nuclear weapons capability,” said a recent report from the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a Washington-based NGO that works towards reduction of nuclear weapons.

To compensate for its lack of indigenous knowledge-based infrastructure, Riyadh, which routinely deploys its wealth to win international favours, had also assumed that forming an alliance with a nuclear power, such as Pakistan, would offer “purchased” protection. By showing generosity to the Pakistani or the Egyptian military, Riyadh can tap into the Pakistani nuclear programme and order bombs when it wants to, the theory went.

Shortcomings in Saudi largesse

But a recent development showed the shortcomings of Saudi largesse. Pakistan balked at sending ground troops to fight in Yemen alongside the inexperienced Saudi soldiers; an episode that embarrassed Riyadh and showed the limits of its money-based security strategy.

Many nuclear arms experts who monitor the Middle East say that Saudi nuclear weapons “on order” is an allegation that has not been substantiated in any way.

“It can be done, but it seems very unlikely,” said Lewis. “Most experts doubt that Pakistan would set aside nuclear weapons for transfer to Saudi Arabia or participate in a nuclear sharing arrangement.”

Saudi allies, particularly the U.S., will not tolerate

Saudi going nuclear as their over-zealous media and some in the regime would like to claim.

Washington has talked about offering Riyadh a “nuclear umbrella” that would purportedly protect Gulf states including Saudi Arabia against a nuclear Iran. If it was to go ahead, the deal would in fact limit Saudi nuclear ambitions.

Under the proposal Saudi Arabia would be negotiating a civil nuclear cooperation agreement. It is expected to include language whereby Saudi Arabia voluntarily refrain from enrichment and reprocessing. Heavy investments in the King Abdullah Center for Atomic and Renewable Energy would be scaled back and plans for city-sized research center would be shelved. The money would be going to US coffers instead.

The nuclear blustering in the Saudi media can also prove hollow on other counts. This month (in October) the IMF said that Riyadh suffers low oil prices and a budget deficit that could erode reserves quickly.

Worse, in their zeal to spread its regional hegemony, the Saudi royal family took on large foreign expenditure as well. It contributed some 6 billion dollars to the military coup in Egypt that toppled the country's first elected president for fear democracy could spread to the conservative kingdom. It later started a costly bombardment campaign on the Shiite Houthi Group in Yemen in March 2015 on top of its bankrolling some Syrian rebel groups fighting for the fourth year.

The Iran deal may have indeed alarmed the Saudi regime into unleashing its propagandists into nuclear grandstanding but the country had missed the opportunity of a real nuclear programme a long time ago. Re-opening that window again can and will take many more years.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 25 October 2015]

*Emad Mekay is Middle East correspondent and Middle East Bureau Chief of International Press Syndicate and its flagship IDN-InDepthNews.

Photo: Saudi Arabia attended the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague

Credit: www.kacare.gov.sa

International Partnership Updates on Nuclear Disarmament Verification

By Fabíola Ortiz

NEW YORK (IDN) - An effective verification of atomic arsenals as well as that of nuclear material and other military activities is a pre-condition for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, experts told IDN. They were participating in a briefing to update on International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The establishment of the IPNDV goes back to December 4, 2014, when the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller announced a new initiative to develop the tools and technologies in the quest to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The IPNDV channels, as the U.S. Department of State says, expertise from both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states to address the complex challenges involved in the verification of nuclear disarmament.

The inaugural meeting was held in Washington, DC in March 2015. Ahead of the IPNDV plenary on November 16-18 in Oslo (Norway) to finalize the terms of reference, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the United States Mission to the UN co-hosted on October 14 a public side event at the United Nations in New York, 'Building a Path Forward: Update on the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification'.

An important participant in the event was Jørn Osmundsen, senior adviser on Global Security and Disarmament at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway. Explaining the rationale behind the Partner

ship initiative, he said: "In order to dismantle nuclear weapons, we need tools to make verifications. Being able to verify disarmament is a pre-condition for reaching a world without nuclear weapons."

"The whole purpose of the meeting was to . . . give countries an update on the progress that we have made since the initial kick-off meeting of the international partnership (IPNDV). We wanted to raise awareness of what we are doing," Andrew Bieniawski, the vice-president of the NTI, told IDN.

According to him, the main benefit of this international partnership is that it includes countries both with and without nuclear weapons. There are currently more than 25 states involved in the partnership.

"It is not just trying to get as large a number of countries as possible, but it is getting the right set of countries that have expertise that can provide value and input into the process," he emphasized, referring to countries like Norway, Britain, Australia and Poland that include those knowledgeable in the field.

"We are working to provide as much confidence as possible but at the same time protect sensitive information. There is a balance between studying the technologies and learning lessons from on-site inspections to building as much confidence as possible. But we have to do it in a safe and secure manner complying with safety and security regulations," he said.

According to NTI, there are still a lot of technical issues

that need to be resolved on way to an effective verification system.

Following the inaugural meeting in Washington DC, the Partnership countries agreed to set up three working groups: on monitoring and verification objectives co-chaired by The Netherlands and Italy; on-site Inspections that will be the responsibility of Australia and Poland; and the third working group related to technical challenges and solutions, chaired by Sweden and United States.

The three groups are now reviewing the drafts and terms of reference to determine the charter to be finalized and approved in Oslo.

Comprehensive library

"We have been putting a lot of work into this partnership. Countries have different levels of expertise and understanding on this complicated issue," NTI vice-president Bieniawski said.

In coordination with the U.S. State Department and the Department of Energy, NTI has built a comprehensive library of articles, reports and studies on a range of verification and monitoring topics with the relevant work completed to date.

"There are more than 200 documents that are now available at the NTI website. They are free and unclassified. We want to build a body of knowledge and increase the capacity of the partnership. This shows the partnership is already active underway even though it is a multi-year process," explained Bieniawski.



In his view, the reaction from the countries attending the public side event at the UN was positive. “There were very good insightful questions. It is clear that the audience knows a lot about this issue. One of the main things we emphasize is that we are trying to be as transparent as possible,” stated.

The senior program officer at the NTI for Material Security and Minimization and the Nuclear Security Project, Kelsy Hartigan, who also attended the meeting at the UN, said the Partnership is intended to gather and share know-how among countries.

“States do have a lot of technical expertise in related areas that can be applied to disarmament verification. This will be a long term and sustainable partnership.

One of the main goals is focused on capacity building and connecting the dots between technical experts who work on other aspects central to Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and disarmament issues,” he told IDN.

The next meeting in Oslo is awaited with great expectations. By the time, the three working groups co-chaired by the six countries will have agreed on a charter to put into practice.

“This work is very technical and it takes time. We cannot rush. We have taken the time to develop the terms of reference of the three working groups.

And this is one of the objectives of the Oslo meeting, to finalize those terms of reference,” explained Jørn Osmundsen of the Foreign Ministry in Oslo.

Norway has shown a solid record on disarmament becoming a priority in the Government’s foreign policy, he said. It played an active role in the negotiations on the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.

In response to the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament negotiations, the Norwegian government co-sponsored a UN General Assembly resolution in October 2012 that established a new process to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations (the so-called Open Ended Working Group).

In March 2013, Oslo hosted the first Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, a wake-up call for nuclear abolition. Since then, two further conferences have taken place in Nayarit (Mexico) in February 2014, and in Vienna (Austria) in December 2014. “

“We have some solid experience that we can bring into this partnership,” added the senior adviser on Disarmament from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs referring to the 2007 UK-Norway initiative (UKNI) on nuclear warhead dismantlement verification.

The UKNI is collaboration between experts from both countries to a collaborative technical research on nuclear disarmament verification in order to enhance transparency, confidence and openness, and advance progress towards the UK and Norway’s shared aim of the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

“If we are to reach the point of a world without nuclear weapons, we need a verification regime. And this is not easily developed, we need to start working on that now,” said Osmundsen.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 19 October 2015]

Image: Cropped Web Banner IPNDV

EU Gives Additional Funds to Promote Entry into Force of Nuclear Test Ban Treaty



CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo and Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and member of the CTBT Group of Eminent Persons (GEM)

By Jaya Ramachandran

BERLIN (IDN) - With a view to promoting entry-into-force of the nuclear test ban treaty, the European Union (EU) has decided to increase its support to the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) by contributing an additional amount of 3 million euros (about 3.9 million dollars). This brings the bloc's voluntary financial contributions since 2006 to a total of some 19 million euros (nearly 21.5 million dollars).

As a group, all 28 EU Member States have signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The EU Member States' regular contributions amount to around 40 percent of the CTBTO's budget.

The CTBT plays a central role in underpinning the international non-proliferation regime and the efforts of the European Union (EU) towards global disarmament. "The EU is, therefore, strongly committed to the entry into force and universalisation of the CTBT," the delegation of the European Union to the international organizations in Vienna stated in a press note on October 19, 2015. These contributions are in line with the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the note said.

"The overarching aim of the European Council's decision of October 12, 2015 is to further promote the universalisation and entry-into-force of the Treaty, which are two of the key objectives of the EU Strategy, but also contribute to the operation and sustainability of the CTBTO verification system as well as the development of its operational capabilities," the press note explained.

A pertinent example that clearly demonstrates the relevance of the Treaty and the constantly improving performance of its verification regime, the EU added, can be seen in the detection of the nuclear tests by North Korea during the last years, and the prompt action of the CTBTO in this regard.

"Furthermore, the Organisation has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to effectively monitor compli-

ance with the Treaty and to provide the international community with independent and reliable means to ensure compliance with it, once it enters into force," the European bloc stated.

Responding to the EU decision, CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo said: "I believe that without the European Union's support we could not have reached the current well-advanced status in the build-up and operational capabilities of the CTBT verification regime."

This, he added, includes the EU's help to developing countries to build capacities in CTBT verification technologies, thus getting buy-in from these countries into the world's largest and most sophisticated multilateral verification system, referred to by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry as one of the great achievements of the modern world.

"As we prepare to mark 20 years since the opening for signature of the CTBT, the strong political and financial support of the EU are vital in ensuring continued progress toward achieving entry into force," Zerbo declared.

Building on previous EU voluntary contributions, the new EU Council Decision provides support to the CTBT verification regime in three main areas, CTBTO explained in a web posted note on October 19, 2015.

1. Sustaining the International Monitoring System Network

The first part of the contribution aims to support the CTBTO's network of monitoring stations the International Monitoring System (IMS). This includes assistance to countries hosting auxiliary seismic stations that need support (unlike for all other types of CTBTO monitoring stations, the upkeep and maintenance of this type of station is the financial responsibility of the host State).

Another project aims at enhancing the IMS capabilities to detect radionuclides, a radioactive noble gas emitted by nuclear explosions, but also by legitimate civilian activities such as medical isotope production. The

contribution will fund both studies of global radionuclide background levels and developing a system to trap radionuclide emissions at the source.

Other projects under this heading include upgrades to the VDeC system, a portal that allows external researchers to access IMS data and International Data Centre Products, as well as upgrades to IDC software for analysing waveform (seismic, infrasound and hydroacoustic) data.

2. Upgrading on-site inspection capabilities

To further the CTBTO's on-site inspection capabilities, the contribution will allow for the purchase of multi-spectral imaging equipment for use from aircraft as was used in the last comprehensive on-site inspection exercise, the IFE14 in Jordan in last 2014. The contribution will also allow for the acquisition of a laser distance measuring system, also for use on an airborne platform, to support a range of on-site inspection techniques.

3. Outreach and country-level capacity building

The contribution will allow the CTBTO to continue its capacity building programmes in developing countries, which has been an integral part of all previous EU voluntary contributions.

This support allows these countries to establish and maintain a National Data Centre, which is the data centre maintained in each CTBT Member State to receive monitoring data and products and to advise its government on events of interest. The capacity building efforts will focus on the NDC-in-a-box standard software package and on the regions of Middle East and South Asia, as well as Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Far East.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 19 October 2015]

Photo: CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo with Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and member of the CTBTO Group of Eminent Persons (GEM).

Credit: CTBTO

Nuke Disarmament Groups Ask Obama and Putin to ‘Reduce Nuclear Risks’

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN (IDN) - Major nuclear disarmament groups are deeply concerned over speculations whether a Russian Tupolev Tu-160 supersonic bomber, intercepted late September in British airspace, was planning to attack the country and unleash World War 3. They have urged Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama to agree to “an immediate reduction in nuclear risks”.

In a letter addressed also to Congressional Committees, Ministers for Defence and Foreign Affairs as well as other policy makers, the nuke disarmament groups warn of “the risks of catastrophic unintended consequences arising from possible clashes between NATO and Russian forces during a number of recent exercises”.

The letter made public on October 7 points out that in September, a Russian Tupolev *Tu-160*, a strategic bomber and a missile carrier that was intercepted by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces during an incursion into the British airspace, was discovered to have started the countdown to arm a nuclear bomb.

Human Survival Project (HSP) and People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) – both based in Australia – coordinated the letter. HSP was “adopted” by the Council of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS) at Sydney University in June 2012 as a joint initiative of CPACS and PND. The latter has been active in Australia since 1960 and has a significant presence in the international disarmament movement.

HSP and PND say that both Russian and NATO forces have recently conducted a number of exercises that were 'mirror-imaged' by the other side in close proximity to each other. “Nuclear-armed forces on both sides may have been involved. The potential for catastrophic miscalculation is obvious,” they say.

The letter initiated by HSP and PND, supported by several nuclear disarmament organizations is one of a series of communications that have been written over

the last few months on this issue, including one by Generals Cartwright and Vladimir Dvorkin, responsible for the operation respectively of the U.S. and Russian nuclear forces.

Signatories of the letter include: the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), awardee of 1985 Nobel Peace Prize; Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign, comprising cities from around the world; the Middle Powers Initiative, the World Future Council – WFC; and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. Several members of various parliaments have signed the letter.

The letter points to “apocalyptic” stakes. The use of the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, constituting some 90-95 percent of total global nuclear stocks, would completely destroy all that we now call 'civilisation' in less than 90 minutes, nuclear disarmament groups say.

“The burning of large numbers of cities, itself encompassing the deaths of up to half of all humans, (depending on targeting) would give rise to catastrophic global climatic consequences, affecting even countries that had no involvement in the initial conflict, and resulting in temperatures colder than the last



ice-age,” warns the letter.

It adds: “This would mean that most of those still left would either starve or freeze in the darkness of a nuclear winter.”

Three nuke risk reduction measures

Nuclear risk reduction measures that disarmament groups are urging, include: (1) lowering nuclear alert levels so that decision-makers are no longer faced with the necessity to take utterly apocalyptic decisions in time frames measured in a few short minutes based on inadequate information; (2) the sharing of launch data; and (3) the avoidance of provocative military exercises and postures.

In order to stress point 1, the letter draws attention to a number of UN General Assembly resolutions urging a lowering in operational readiness, such as the resolution on 'Operational Readiness of Nuclear Weapon Systems' sponsored by New Zealand, Switzerland, Sweden, Chile, Malaysia and Nigeria, and India's 'Reducing Nuclear Dangers' resolution.

As regards point 2, the letter recalls U.S.-Russian agreement in 1998 to establish a Joint Data Exchange Center. It followed a 'near miss' in 1995, when a weather research rocket was mistaken for a U.S. SLBM (submarine-launched ballistic missile). That agreement has been reaffirmed a number of times, most recently in 2010. But the Joint Data Exchange Center has yet to be set up.

Referring to point 3, the letter says: “A series of measures concerning nuclear posture, notably 'no first use' doctrines and a decision to no longer target cities (as noted above cities are the most prolific source of the black smoke that brings about nuclear winter) would also make a vast contribution to the reduction of the risk of nuclear catastrophe.”

Addressing the Russian and U.S. Presidents, the disarmament groups “strongly echo and endorse” the concern – “if not alarm” – expressed by Generals James Cartwright and Vladimir Dvorkin, former commanders of American and Russian missile forces, from Interna-

tional Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), and from faith leaders worldwide, at the possibility that tension between Russia and NATO may spiral out of control with a catastrophic outcome.

De-alerting nukes

In fact a related study on “de-alerting” (increasing the time gap between order to launch nuclear weapons and actually launching these) by Global Zero headed by Generals Cartwright and Dvorkin says: “Tension between Russia and the West over the Ukraine crisis has brought the parties one step closer to the precipice of nuclear brinkmanship, the point at which nuclear risk skyrockets,” and “it has flared to the point that it is producing dangerous misunderstandings and action-reaction cycles with strong escalatory updrafts.”

The signatories of the letter take note of the fact that on the 40th anniversary – on September 16 – of the signing of the Helsinki Document establishing the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution which “Expressed deep concern at increased nuclear threats arising from the deteriorating relationship between Russia and NATO”, and “Called on all OSCE States with nuclear weapons or under extended nuclear deterrence relationships to reduce the risks of a nuclear war by taking nuclear weapons off high-alert, and by adopting no-first use policies”.

Like the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, signatories of the letter are deeply alarmed over the direction in which the confrontation over the borders of the Ukraine may be going.

“What is placed at risk, in the very worst case, is civilization itself, and potentially, human survival. This is not of course to say that a completely 'apocalyptic' event sequence is what WILL take place, or even that this is the most likely outcome of such a sequence.”

The signatories “hope and pray” that nothing of the sort takes place and that a peaceful negotiated settlement of issues arising from the 2014 Ukraine crisis will be eventually reached by all parties, including Russia.

However, in their view, the likelihood of a catastrophic outcome is by no means zero. “The record of history – especially of August 1914 – shows that even where national leaders are confident that they have everything in hand, events can spin out of control with consequences that are completely out of proportion to anything that might initially have been at stake.”

The letter continues: “Confrontational attitudes and actions, (particularly between militaries), no matter who initiates them or who is to 'blame', can as the European Leadership Network points out, all too easily lead to accidental conflict or even to just plain catastrophic accident.

“If this were to lead to deeper and prolonged military conflict between two parties (such as in the Baltics) there is no telling where it would stop, or if it could be stopped at all without spiraling (as in 1914) into a conflict that no-one actually sought, but which no-one did enough to prevent.”

The safest nuclear weapon by far is one that does not exist at all. The majority of the world's governments and parliaments, not to mention NGOs, see the elimination of nuclear weapons not as something it might be 'nice' to do 'in some century', but as an urgent existential priority.

The nuclear disarmament groups, therefore, urge the nuclear weapons states to move toward “the complete and total elimination of nuclear weapons, as mandated by the Nuclear Nonproliferation treaty (NPT) itself, as an urgent existential priority”.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 07 October 2015]

Photo: Tupolev Tu-160

Credit: Wikimedia Commons - Alex Beltyukov

Kazakh and Japan Go ‘Aggressive’ for Entry into Force of Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty

By Fabíola Ortiz

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) - “We will be working very aggressively to achieve the goal of making the world nuclear free by 2045,” when the United Nations will mark its 100th birthday, declared Erlan Idrissov, Foreign Minister of the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan.

Idrissov was addressing the 9th Ministerial-level Conference on Facilitating the Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on September 29 at the United Nations headquarters in New York. He was co-chair with Japan’s Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

The Kazakh Foreign Minister warned delegates he would be “blunt, even undiplomatic” in pushing for a legally binding nuclear test-ban. “Our countries (Kazakh and Japan) have the moral right to be aggressive about abolishing nuclear weapons.”

Co-chair Kishida highlighted Japan’s historical role and obligation to work with the international community to ban nuclear tests and nuclear weapons, making particular reference to this year’s 70th anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the experience of nuclear-bomb survivors, the Hibakusha.

The Conference was attended by a large number of Foreign Ministers from ratifying states, as well as Members of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEM), including the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, former UK Secretary of State for Defence Lord Desmond Browne, Commissioner of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane, and CTBTO Executive Secretary Emeritus Wolfgang Hoffmann.

The Conference, also known as the Article XIV Conference in accordance with the relevant Treaty article, adopted a Final Declaration, which affirms “that a universal and effectively verifiable Treaty constitutes a

fundamental instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.”

Pope Francis backs such fervent appeals. He reminded the UN General Assembly delegates on September 25 that “there is an urgent need to work for a world free of nuclear weapons”.

Speaking at the opening of the Conference, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that “the CTBT is essential to realizing our vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. It will help ensure that the international community is no longer forced to live in the shadow of nuclear weapons”.

He also promised: “As a former Chairman of the CTBT Preparatory Committee, I am personally committed to doing everything possible to see this Treaty enter into force,” adding jokingly that in line with his name “spelled B-A-N, I am determined to ban any nuclear tests”.

CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo expressed his ardent wish that more be done and that Member States show real leadership in advancing the entry into force of the Treaty.

“2016 will mark twenty years since the CTBT was opened for signature. I don’t regard this as a reason for celebration. Almost twenty years later, we find ourselves at a conference provided for under Article XIV of the Treaty to accelerate entry into force,” Zerbo told IDN.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature in 1996 and aims to put a cap on the development of nuclear weapons as well as prohibit all nuclear weapon test explosions worldwide.

But it has not entered into force because eight states have yet to ratify it. These are: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, United States and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). They are the remaining States from a list of 44 nuclear technology holders at

the time of the final negotiations late 1990’s.

CTBT establishes a global network of monitoring facilities and allows for on-site inspections of suspicious events anywhere in the world. The overall accord contains a preamble, 17 treaty articles, two treaty annexes and a protocol detailing verification procedures.

The Kazakh foreign minister recalled that 24 years ago when the country became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan had over 1,400 nuclear warheads. It was a nuclear weapon test site and hosted biological and chemical weapon production facilities.

“In our first decade of independence, we decided to dismantle all Soviet weapons systems and facilities and were at the forefront of signing important international nonproliferation treaties,” said Idrissov.

“We decided to help the world to become safer and that decision inspired others. Achieving a nuclear free world is a difficult task. As a young nation we want to inspire everyone. Both Japan and Kazakhstan suffered the ugliest effects of the militarism of nuclear weapons. The 500 nuclear tests that happened in Kazakhstan is a great reminder of the most devastating danger of this type of weapon,” he said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida, Conference co-chair, recalled the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, his hometown, and Nagasaki.

The banning of nuclear testing is an effective pillar in nuclear disarmament and CTBT has contributed to enhancing the norm of nuclear test ban, he argued. “We must accelerate our efforts towards the early entry into force of the treaty.”

Kishida also highlighted the need to promote further development of the International Monitoring System (IMS) and provide training for operators of the National Data Center that supports IMS.

IMS is a worldwide network that will help to verify compliance, detect and confirm violations of the CTBT. Today, the IMS is 80 percent complete and currently consists of 254 monitoring stations and 10 of the 16 radionuclide laboratories that have been certified.

In order to make the necessary preparations to implement the CTBT, a Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) was set up in 1996 in Vienna.

Zerbo agrees with the Kazakh Foreign Minister that a more “aggressive approach” is required. “They want to act constructively but in an aggressive manner to be able to get this treaty closed and to go beyond the normal diplomatic chart which is: we call upon all countries to ratify, wait two years and again go through the rhetoric. We need to have a concrete plan of action and a timeframe of what we want to achieve,” he added.

The Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO is intended to be created as soon as all nations ratify the treaty. However, Zerbo argues that even if the organization has not been officially created, they are already working accordingly as if it was an organization itself.

“We are a group of more than 400 people who are working effectively. We cannot continue engaging people, spending tax payers’ money, building such an infrastructure like the International Monitoring System and then say that it is not ready in entering into force,” the CTBTO Executive Secretary said.

Zerbo considers the year of 2006 as a landmark when they detected the DPRK nuclear test. “We proved to the international community that we can detect nuclear test explosion with efficiency. We have a framework that works effectively to provide States what was required under the treaty, that is, giving data, showing we can provide information that any nuclear test explosion would go undetected.”

According to Des Browne, member of the CTBT Group of Eminent Persons (GEM) and Vice-Chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the answer still lies in politics. While the U.S. was the first signatory (September 24, 1996) and one of the instigators of the treaty, it has not ratified due to domestic politics.

“Some barriers are related to international politics. In China’s case, they have made very clear they would ratify a minute after the U.S. does so. If we could break any of resistance in the Middle East countries, (the ratification) could come in a cascade effect. The same thing applies to India and Pakistan: it is about regional politics,” said Browne to IDN.

The U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken confirmed the country’s engagement in pushing the treaty to be approved by the Senate.

“Given the clear and convincing evidence we know that to enforce the comprehensive ban treaty is good for the security of the U.S. and it is good for the international security. It is a key step in diminishing world’s reliance on nuclear weapons and reduce the risk of a nuclear arm race,” Blinken said.

He added: “The U.S. is committed to the treaty and we are working aggressively to build the case at home for ratification. Other States should also be pursuing ratification and ensuring their plans for how they are doing so, there is no reason to wait on any country. CTBT is not an abstract concept for the theoretical world. It is a firm and a certain step to a peace and security for our own citizens and to our own people of the world.”

World history has proven that nuclear weapons are destructive and indiscriminate causing health and environmental impacts. For Nobuyasu Abe, Vice-Chairman at the Japan Atomic Energy Commission and also a member of GEM, people realize this kind of weapon shouldn’t be used anymore.

“If the U.S. thinks well and considers the long term benefits for the country they should support the ratification because such weapon can be hardly used. So why do you need to keep on testing? They do not need to test anymore; they have conducted 1,000 nuclear tests, the biggest number among the countries. That time is over. It will become a useless and unusable asset,” Abe told IDN.

A world free of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons is achievable by 2045, believes Des Browne. Thirty years ago, a meeting between U.S. President Ronald Reagan and his counterpart from the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, proposed banning all ballistic missiles. This meeting took place in 1986.

“For ten minutes they opened up the possibility of a world free of nuclear weapons. I personally think that the state of politics at the moment has to be step by step but it is possible. It will happen unexpectedly. Things can change very quickly. I don’t think we failed at all,” Des Browne insisted.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 30 September 2015]

U.S. 100th Member State to Join Nuke Terrorism Treaty

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - A 1997 movie titled "The Peacemaker" –partly shot outside the United Nations – dramatised the story of a Yugoslav terrorist who acquires a backpack-sized nuclear weapon, gone missing after a train wreck in rural Russia, and brings it to New York to detonate it outside U.N. headquarters.

Was it another Hollywood fantasy? Or a disaster waiting to happen?

Conscious of the remote possibility of a terrorist group arming itself with stolen nuclear weapons, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly back in April 2005 and entered into force in July 2007.

Currently, there are 99 states parties who have ratified the treaty, including the nuclear powers China, France, India, Russia, and the United Kingdom.

On Wednesday, the United States became the 100th state party when it handed over the instruments of ratification to the U.N. Treaty Section.

"This is good news – as with the ratification of any Treaty or Convention limiting the use of nuclear weapons by a major nuclear weapon state," Jayantha Dhanapala, the former U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, told IPS.

He said it is useful to recall that it was Russia that initiated this Convention in 2005 and to date there are 115 signatories and 99 states parties.

"Nuclear terrorism has been widely feared especially after 9/11 and it is well known that non-state actors like Al Qaeda and now ISIL (Islamic State in the Levant) are engaged in a quest for nuclear materials to make a nuclear weapon, however rudimentary," said Dhanapala, who has been President of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, since 2007.

"And yet we must not delude ourselves into over estimating the significance of this action when more urgent treaties like the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) await ratification by the United States and seven other states in order to ensure its entry into force rendering permanent the norm against nuclear weapon testing – an important brake on the development of nuclear weapons," he added.

As long as 15,850 nuclear warheads are held by nine countries – 93 percent with the United States and Russia – their use in a war, caused by deliberate political intent or by accident and by nation states or non state actors – remain a frightening reality with appalling humanitarian consequences and irreversible ecological and genetic effects, said Dhanapala, who also serves as a member of the Board of Sponsors of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and a governing board member of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

The Nuclear Terrorism Convention is described as part of global efforts to prevent terrorists from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction.

It details offences relating to unlawful and intentional possession and use of radioactive material or radioactive devices, and use or damage of nuclear facilities.

The convention is also designed to promote cooperation among countries through the sharing of information and the provision of assistance for investigations and extraditions.

Dr. M.V. Ramana, a physicist and lecturer at Princeton University's Program on Science and Global Security and the Nuclear Futures Laboratory, told IPS: "I would like to take the conversation in a different direction and ask what is nuclear terrorism?"

He said Webster's dictionary defines terrorism as "the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion."

Nuclear weapons can cause massive death and destruction; any population faced with this possibility would be terrorized, he argued.

"Think of the people in any number of countries in the Middle East who are told by the U.S. President or some senior official that 'all options are on the table', implying, of course, the use of nuclear weapons."

Under any fair and just definition of terrorism, anyone who uses a nuclear weapon to threaten another population would be a terrorist. This includes those who use nuclear weapons "just for deterrence," he declared.

Remember that the ability to credibly project terror is ultimately at the heart of the strategy of deterrence and the safety that it is supposed to derive from deterrence is, as Winston Churchill proclaimed, "the sturdy child of terror."

"I think the challenge for those seeking peace is to shift the discourse away from "nuclear terrorism by non-state actors" and turn the attention onto nuclear weapon states, which base their policies on the threat of nuclear death and destruction, and the urgency of disarming them," said Dr Ramana who is author of several publications, including "*The Power of Promise: Examining Nuclear Energy in India.*"

Rose Gottemoeller, U.S. Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security said last week that when it comes to nuclear terrorism, "we are safer now than we were five years ago, but more remains to be done."

The United States, she said, will continue to work with international partners to ensure that dangerous nuclear materials are accounted for and secured worldwide. "Unending vigilance is required if we are to ensure that terrorist groups who may seek to acquire these materials are never able to do so."

She said the United States is the largest national contributor to the IAEA's (International Atomic Energy

Agency) Nuclear Security Fund, providing more than 70 million dollars since 2010.

These funds support cost-free experts, mission and technical visits to Member States, the development of nuclear security guidance and best practices, and the Incident and Trafficking Database.

She said the State Department's Counter Nuclear Smuggling Program (CNSP) is also working with key international partners to strengthen capacity to investigate nuclear smuggling networks, secure materials in illegal circulation, and prosecute the criminals who are involved.

Countries such as Georgia and Moldova are to be commended for their recent arrests of criminals attempting to traffic highly enriched uranium (HEU); significant progress has been made in this area. Unfortunately, continued seizures of weapon-usable nuclear materials indicate that these materials are still available on the black market, she pointed out.

According to the United Nations, some of the key provisions of the Convention include: the criminalization of planning, threatening, or carrying out acts of nuclear terrorism; the requirement for States to criminalize these offenses through national legislation and to establish penalties in line with the gravity of such crimes; conditions under which States may establish jurisdiction for offenses; and guidelines for extradition and other measures of punishment.

Additionally, there is the requirement for States to make every effort to adopt appropriate measures to ensure the protection of radioactive material; and the distinction that the Convention does not cover the activities of armed forces during an armed conflict or military exercise and cannot be interpreted as addressing the "legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by States."

(IPS | 30 September 2015)

Photo: Jayantha Dhanapala



Japan and Kazakh to Facilitate Entry into Force of Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty

By Kanya D’Almeida

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) - Ahead of a major international conference on September 29 at the UN headquarters in New York, pressure is mounting on the eight states whose backing is vital to the entering-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT): China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States.

Negotiated at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 10, 1996, the CTBT boasts 183 signatures and 164 ratifications, but remains hamstrung by the refusal of eight of the 44 so-called Annex II nations (those that possessed nuclear facilities at the time of negotiations) to sign and ratify the Treaty.

A comprehensive ban on nuclear testing is widely seen as an essential component of, and the final barrier to, global nuclear disarmament and a non-proliferation regime.

The upcoming Article XIV Conference (or the Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the CTBT) is expected to target these eight nuclear-weapons states, in the hope of paving the way to a legally binding norm against nuclear testing.

Speaking to IDN on the sidelines of the 25th UN Conference on Disarmament Issues that took place in the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 26-28, Deputy Foreign Minister for Kazakhstan Yerzhan Ashikbayev explained that supporting the CTBT is a “natural stance” for his country, which will be co-chairing the September 29 Article XIV conference along with Japan.

The 18,000-square-km Semipalatinsk Test Site in northeastern Kazakhstan was the primary testing ground for the nuclear weapons programme of the now

defunct Soviet Union. Between 1949 and 1989 the area endured some 456 nuclear tests, which directly impacted the health of an estimated 200,000 residents including an increased incidence of cancer and other conditions related to radiation exposure.

Given that 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – resulting in upwards of 220,000 deaths – Japan is also naturally leading the diplomatic charge to prevent nuclear testing.

Acknowledging that the summit has a “big agenda” to tackle, Ambassador Kazutoshi Aikawa, Director-General of Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Science Department with Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs told IDN he is “hopeful that representatives from the eight [outlying] states will join us in making this meeting a success.”

In the five decades between 1945 and 1996 – the year the CTBT was adopted – the United States carried out over 1,000 nuclear tests and the Soviet Union conducted over 700. France also ran upwards of 200 tests during this time period, while the UK and China were each responsible for some 45 tests.

According to the Vienna-based Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), the body tasked with monitoring compliance with the treaty, only three countries have undertaken nuclear explosions since 1996: India and Pakistan (in 1998), and the DPRK (in 2006, 2009 and 2013).

In total, some 2,050 tests were carried out since the end of World War II in over 60 different locations around the globe. The CTBTO says these test sites “offer stunning contrasts”, from tropical South Pacific

atolls (which served as testing grounds for the U.S., the UK and France), to Novaya Zemlya, the “remote ice-bound archipelago in the Arctic Ocean” that served for many years as the Soviet Union’s testing site.

With its global network of nearly 300 seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide detecting stations, the CTBTO has made it much harder for states to conduct covert nuclear tests – be they in the atmosphere, underground, or underwater.

Yet without the eight crucial signatures of key nuclear weapons states, the Treaty is powerless to impose sanctions or other punitive measures on violators, even if tests are detected.

In an interview with IDN at the August disarmament conference, former United Nations Under Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs Jayantha Dhanapala expressed concern about the “fragility” of the prevailing political reality vis-à-vis nuclear testing.

“We are aware the DPRK might test, and we’ve also heard from William Perry, former U.S. defense secretary, that Russian scientists are pressuring the political leadership of that country – which has signed and ratified the treaty – to resume testing,” he said.

“If this is true then there is a grave danger that the CTBT is in some kind of peril,” added Dhanapala, who also serves as president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

“Since the UN Security Council is the custodian of international peace and security, a unanimous resolution stating that the continuation of the moratorium against nuclear testing is a fundamental element of peace and security would help bolster the legitimacy of the CTBT,” he stated.

Indeed, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon himself has made personal appeals to the eight states to ratify the treaty.

In a statement delivered to the world body on September 10, the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, Ban said, “I have met with victims of nuclear tests. I have witnessed the lasting societal, environmental and economic damage nuclear tests have caused [...]. Many have never recovered from the legacies of nuclear testing – including poisoned groundwater, cancer, birth defects and radioactive fallout.”

Welcoming the voluntary moratoria on testing imposed by many nuclear-armed states, Ban added: “Moratoria are no substitute for a CTBT in force. The three nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea are proof of this.

“Almost two decades after the CTBT was negotiated, it is long past time for the treaty to enter into force,” he concluded.

According to the National Resources Defense Council, nuclear tests carried out between 1945 and 1980 accounted for 510 megatons; of these, atmospheric tests alone yielded 428 mt – the equivalent of 29,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs.

While the amount of radioactivity released by each test depends largely on the size, scale and type of explosion, countless scientific studies have documented their adverse health and environmental impacts, including severe air and groundwater pollution, damage to flora and fauna and, for humans, injuries to internal organs, skin, eyes and even cells.

Ionizing radiation, the umbrella term for various particulate matter and rays given off by radioactive materials, is a scientifically proven carcinogen. Radia-

tion exposure is known to cause leukaemia, as well as a cancers of the thyroid, lung and breast.

A chapter on the effects of nuclear tests on the CTBTO website explains that “studies and evaluations including an assessment by Arjun Makhijani on the health effects of nuclear weapon complexes, estimate that cancer fatalities due to the global radiation doses from the atmospheric nuclear testing programmes of the five nuclear-weapon States amount to hundreds of thousands.”

Furthermore, the CTBTO states, “A 1991 study by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) estimated that the radiation and radioactive materials from atmospheric testing taken in by people up until the year 2000 would cause 430,000 cancer deaths, some of which had already occurred by the time the results were published.

“The study predicted that roughly 2.4 million people could eventually die from cancer as a result of atmospheric testing.”

Given these grim realities, entering-into-force of the CTBT is an urgent task, but while many have admitted that ratification by all required parties is not an “if” but a “when”, even experts are hard-pressed to put an exact date on that “when”.

Asked when the CTBT will become a legal reality, Ambassador Sérgio de Queiroz Duarte, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and President of the 2005 NPT Review Conference told IDN, “This is what was once called the 60,000-dollar question. Now it is a 60-million-dollar question and soon it will be the 60-billion-dollar question but still – no answer.”

“The culprit is the situation of the world as it has

evolved,” he said. “Powerful nations want to keep their power and privileges.”

At present, Ashikbayev estimates there are 16,000 warheads in the arsenals of nuclear powers, capable of “destroying the earth several times over.”

Data from the Arms Control Association suggest that Russia and the United States account for 90 percent of the global nuclear warhead inventory, with 7,700 and 7,100 weapons respectively. France follows at a distant third place with 300 warheads, while China boasts 250 weapons and the UK is in possession of 225.

Pakistan and India have 110 and 100 nukes respectively, Israel 80 and the DPRK 10 – though experts say these numbers are harder to verify.

Approximately 10,000 warheads are in military service and the remaining 6,000 are reportedly awaiting dismantlement, according to the Arms Control Association.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 21 September 2015]

Nuke Test Ban Treaty Still in Limbo, U.N. Complains

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly back in 1996, has still not come into force for one primary reason: eight key countries have either refused to sign or have held back their ratifications.

The three who have not signed – India, North Korea and Pakistan – and the five who have not ratified – the United States, China, Egypt, Iran and Israel – remain non-committal 19 years following the adoption of the treaty.

When the United Nations last week commemorated International Day Against Nuclear Tests, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed once again to all remaining States – especially the eight holdovers – to sign and ratify the Treaty as “a critical step on the road to a nuclear-weapons-free world.”

Currently, there is a voluntary moratoria on testing imposed by many nuclear-armed States.

“But moratoria are no substitute for a CTBT in force. The three nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) are proof of this,” Ban said.

The warning comes amidst reports Tuesday that North Korea has re-started its programme to produce nuclear weapons.

But chances of all eight countries coming on board in the not-too-distant future are remote, says John Hallam of the Human Survival Project (HSP) and People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND), a joint project between PND and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia.

“I think it is most unlikely that the recalcitrant 8 states will sign and ratify by 2016,” Hallam told IPS.

They include the United States itself, which though has signed, he said, but the Republicans have made it very clear they will not ratify.

Hallam said this also includes both India and Pakistan who have made it clear they have no intention of either

signing or ratifying – “least of all, India under current Prime Minister Narendra Modi (although the nuclear disarmament movement in India has over the years advocated signature and ratification of the CTBT for India).”

Finally, he said, it includes China and one or two others who say they will ratify as soon as the United States has done so.

At a high-level panel discussion last week to commemorate International Day Against Nuclear Tests, Ban said: “The goal of ending nuclear tests has been a leading concern throughout my diplomatic career. “

As Secretary-General, and depository of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, “I have made achieving a legal ban on nuclear testing a personal priority.”

He said he has been to Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan, the site of 456 tests, including some of the largest in history.

“I have met with victims of nuclear tests. I have witnessed the lasting societal, environmental and economic damage nuclear tests have caused.”

Since the first test in New Mexico 70 years ago, he pointed out, the world has endured over two thousand nuclear tests. Those tests devastated pristine environments and local populations around the world.

Many have never recovered from the legacies of nuclear testing – including poisoned groundwater, cancer, birth defects and radioactive fallout, he noted.

“The best way to honour the victims of past tests is to prevent any in the future,” he declared.

The CTBT is a legally-binding, verifiable means by which to constrain the quantitative and qualitative development of nuclear weapons.

Hallam told IPS over 1100 nuclear tests were carried out by the United States in Nevada, Alaska, the Marshall Islands, other parts of the Pacific, and in outer space.

Tests carried out in Nevada resulted in large-scale contamination of downwind inhabitants and large-scale morbidity.

He said the largest ever U.S. test was the 15Megaton Castle Bravo test, which contaminated the crew of the Japanese fishing boat Lucky Dragon, bringing about an agonizing slow death from radiation sickness, and contaminating the Marshall Islands.

The largest nuclear test ever was carried out by the Soviets in the early '60s in Novaya Zemlya, a large island above the arctic circle, and known as ‘Tsar Bomba’ (King of Bombs), he noted.

At 60 megatons, it vaporized the sacred hunting grounds of the Nenets people, sent fallout right around the world and caused the planet to ring like a bell with seismic shock for hours.

Hallam said the Soviets carried out around 800 nuclear tests, many of them at the Semipalatinsk test site, and causing widespread radioactive contamination with catastrophic effects on local populations.

In addition, nuclear tests have been carried out by the UK, (many of them in Maralinga and Emu Field, Australia), France (Algeria and the Pacific), China (Sinkiang), India (Pokhran, Rajasthan) Pakistan (Baluchistan), and the North Korean, French, Chinese, and British tests have all inflicted radiation-based disease and death on local populations and participants.

Nuclear testing is the backbone of nuclear arms-racing and proliferation. A resumption of nuclear testing, or the conducting of a new nuclear test by any country – including the DPRK – helps to inch the world toward an abyss into which we hope it will never go, Hallam said.

The best way to halt proliferation and nail down a ‘no nuclear testing’ norm is for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which outlaws nuclear testing, to come into force, he declared.

Meanwhile, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has launched an international Project, called ATOM (the acronym for Abolish Testing. Our Mission), a worldwide e-campaign, calling on world leaders to end nuclear tests, once and for all. (IPS | 16 September 2015)

Opinion: Can Nuclear War be Avoided?

By Gunnar Westberg *

GÖTEBORG, Sweden (IPS) - The Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons had as members former leading politicians or military officers, among others a British Field Marshal, an American General, an American Secretary of Defence and a French Prime Minister.

The commission unanimously agreed in its report in 1996 that “the proposition that nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never be used – accidentally or by decision – defies credibility. The only complete defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons and assurance that they will never be produced again.”

So that’s it: Nuclear weapons will be used if they are allowed to remain with us. And even a “small” nuclear war, using one percent or less of the world’s nuclear weapons, might cause a worldwide famine leading to the death of a billion humans or more.

Lt Colonel Bruce Blair was for several years in the 1970s commander of U.S. crews with the duty to launch intercontinental nuclear missiles. “I knew how to fire the missiles, I needed no permission,” he states. In the 1990s he was charged with making a review for the U.S. Senate on the question: “Is unauthorised firing of U.S. nuclear weapons a real possibility?”

Blair’s answer was “Yes”, and the risk is not insignificant.

On Hiroshima Day, Aug. 6, this year, a major newspaper in Sweden, Aftonbladet, carried an interview with Colonel Blair, now head of the Global Zero movement for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The reporter asked: “Mr Blair, do you think that nuclear weapons will be used again?” Mr Blair was silent for a while and then responded: “I am afraid it cannot be avoided. A data code shorter than a Twitter message could be enough.” Blair reminds us of the story of the ‘Permissive Action Link’, a security device for nuclear weapons, the purpose of which is to prevent their unauthorised arming or detonation.

When Robert McNamara was U.S. Secretary of Defence in the mid-1960s, he issued an order that to be able to fire missiles from submarines, the commanding officer must have received a code which permitted the launch. However, the navy did not want to be prevented from firing on its own initiative, such as in the case that contact with headquarters was interrupted. The initial code of 00000000 was for this reason retained for many years and was generally known. McNamara, however, did not know this until many years after he left the government.

A Soviet admiral once told me that as late as around 1980 he could fire the missiles from a submarine without a code.

When systems of control of the launch systems are discussed, we often learn – as a kind of post scriptum – that there is a Plan B: If all communication with HQ is dead and the commanders believe the war is on, missiles can be fired. We are never told how this works. But there is a plan B.

What is the situation today? Can an unauthorised launch of nuclear weapons occur? Colonel Blair says “Yes”. Mistakes, misunderstandings, hacker encroachments, human mistakes – there are always risks.

After the end of the Cold War, we have learnt about several “close calls”. There was the Cuban missile crisis and especially the “Soviet submarine left behind”.

There was the Petrov Incident in September 1983. There was the possibly worst crisis – worst but little known – of the NATO exercise ‘Able Archer’ in November 1983 when the Soviet leaders expected a NATO attack any moment – and NATO had no insight into the Soviet paranoia.

There are numerous other dangerous incidents about which we have less information.

Martin Hellman, a mathematician and expert in risk analysis, guesses that the risk of a major nuclear war may have been as high as one percent per year during the 40 Cold War years. That sums up to 40 percent.

Mankind thus had a slightly better than even chance of not being exterminated. We were lucky.

Maybe the risk is smaller today. But with the risk of proliferation, with new funds allocated to nuclear weapons research and with the increasing tension in international relations, the risk may be increasing again. As long as nuclear weapons exist the risk exists. The risk of global omnicide, of Assured Destruction.

It is nuclear weapons or us. We cannot co-exist. One of us will have to go.

A prohibition against nuclear weapons is necessary. And it is possible.

(3 September 2015)

* Gunnar Westberg, Professor of Medicine in Göteborg, Sweden, and Co-President of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) from 2004 to 2008, describes himself as “generally concerned about with what little wisdom our world is governed”. This article was originally published by the Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research (TFF)

Opinion: Campaign to End Nuclear Tests - Kazakhstan Launches ATOM

By Kairat Abdrakhmanov*

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - Despite United Nations General Assembly resolutions since 1946, calling for an end to lethal arsenal, the possession of nuclear weapons has continued to be a symbol of scientific sophistication or military power, until 29 August 1991, when Kazakhstan, upon gaining independence, closed its Nuclear Test Site in Semipalatinsk – the second largest in the world.

This action and the renunciation of our nuclear arsenal – the fourth largest in the world, were unprecedented acts to demonstrate to the world that Kazakhstan does not need these powerful nuclear weapons tests and weapons.

The closure of Semipalatinsk led the way for the closure of other sites in Nevada, Novaya Zemlya, Lop Nur, Moruroa, Kiribati and others.

The detonation of over 600 warheads, one fourth of all 2000 nuclear tests globally, were conducted in a span of four decades on the territory of the Semipalatinsk test site covering a total area is 18.000 sq. km, affecting over 1.5 million people and a land mass of 300,000 sq. km.

In fact, the entire territory of Kazakhstan, was one big polygon, comprising of 11 units spread over the country. Besides nuclear, these included also air, space, missile defence and warning systems, as well as high-powered laser weapons test sites. Among these I would also like to mention the deadly biochemical and bacteriological weapons tested in the Aral Sea (which was the Barkhan Test Site on the former Renaissance Island).

Considering the actions taken by my country, Kazakhstan thus has the full right to call for the universal and prompt measures on the Path to Zero. This frightening data cited here and the 1996 Advisory of the International Court of Justice should spur the global community to act more decisively for the ultimate and irrevocable prohibition of nuclear tests and weapons.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has launched a worldwide e-campaign, an international project, called ATOM (Abolish Testing. Our Mission), calling on world leaders to end nuclear tests, once and for all. To draw attention to the campaign, Karpek Kuyukov, the Goodwill Ambassador of the ATOM project, himself a victim of nuclear radiation, has travelled from Kazakhstan and is here in New York to share his life experiences with us.

Despite being the largest producer and supplier of uranium in the world, Kazakhstan's firm position demonstrates that harmony and cooperation can be stronger armaments for global peace and security than any weaponry.

Disarmament critics still insist that nuclear weapons cannot be dis-invented and that the nuclear genie is well out of the bottle. Kazakhstan and several other countries have proven that it is within our power to put this monstrous genie back into the bottle.

Kazakhstan was amongst the first countries to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My country is committed to the Treaty, and along with Japan will co-chair the International Conference on Article XIV to CTBT on 29 September 2015, to work intensely to bring its entry into force.

This year marks the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations and the start of a transformative Post-2015



development agenda. We must thus have the political will to invest vast resources that would be available as a result of nuclear disarmament to meet compelling human needs and achieve a peaceful and secure world.

Today, a new impetus is needed to move the disarmament machinery forward, considering that the 2015 review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) did not fulfil its anticipated outcome. We commend the three meetings held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, and the many unilateral, bilateral and collective efforts of several countries, together with the dynamic efforts of civil society.

These actions serve as a wake-up call to unite for a nuclear-weapon-free world. We, therefore, welcome the momentum gained by the Humanitarian Pledge put forward by Austria, which Kazakhstan endorsed on 10 July 2015. Likewise, we seek support at the forthcoming First Committee Meeting in October this year for the initiative of our President calling on the international community to adopt the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World. We do not consider this document as the basis for a major debate or tying down the United Nations disarmament machinery. Its value lies in the fact that, despite ongoing disagreements on the means to achieve nuclear disarmament, there is full agreement on the fundamental goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

I would like to point to other examples of successful cooperation between the East and West with the participation of Kazakhstan:

1. When our country became the “epicentre of the world” after renouncing its nuclear arsenal, it was the collaboration with the Russian Federation and the U.S. that made possible the removal and disposal of our nuclear warheads and missiles, as well as the destruction and decommissioning the infrastructure of the former test site.

2. Kazakhstan, along with other countries of the region, established the Central Asian Nuclear-Free-Zone with the signing of the Treaty of Semipalatinsk in 2006, which speedily came into force in 2009. In May 2014, representatives of the “nuclear five” (the P5) signed a Protocol on negative security assurances to the participant states of that Treaty, of which four have already ratified it.

This year, the Central Asian states adopted an Action Plan to strengthen nuclear security in the region. Now we are elaborating regional instruments for the prevention of illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and combating nuclear terrorism.

3. In 2014, we worked to ensure the safety and preservation of hundreds of kilograms of nuclear material, remaining in the galleries at the Massif Degelen, also known as Plutonium Mountain, located at the former Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site. This measure will prevent leakage and improper use of these materials. The constant and perennial trilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan, Russia and the U.S., was announced in Seoul in 2012 by the Presidents of the three countries. It is a striking proof that only a spirit of trust and mutual understanding will make our world secure. Today Kazakhstan is actively preparing for the Fourth Summit to be held in Washington D.C., in 2016 and will host a preparatory Sherpas Meeting in Almaty from 2-4 November 2015.

4. Another significant achievement has been the Agreement signed on 27 August 2015 by the Government of Kazakhstan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for establishing the International Bank of Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU) in 2017 in Eastern Kazakhstan. This initiative is yet another concrete contribution of Kazakhstan in strengthening the non-proliferation regime, and eliminating lacunae existing in the international legal framework. The Bank will allow Member States the right to reliable access to fuel for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It was again the collaboration between the East and West, particularly, Kazakhstan, the P5, as well as the European Union, Norway, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates

-as the main donors of the project – that the Bank became a reality.

5. A most recent example of cooperation is related to the unique Cosmodrome Baikonur located in Kazakhstan – the only site in the world from where space crafts are launched to the International Space Station. On 2 September 2015, the spacecraft “Soyuz” was launched with a new crew, comprising of Kazakh, Russian and Danish cosmonauts, the latter from the European Space Agency. This, once again should inspire us to work together with hope for the future.

I would like to quote President Nazarbayev, who at the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague reminded the world that “general and complete nuclear disarmament” is the only guarantee of nuclear security. He said that we should all live up to our responsibilities to our citizens and the global community to deliver political rather than military solutions in the name of international peace. It is therefore the collective responsibility and commitment of everyone, to increase the momentum for anti-tests and anti-nuclear weapons and to find and implement such peaceful solutions so that we do not forget our common humanity.

(IPS | 12 September 2015)

*Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov is Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations

Photo: Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations.

Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

Opinion: Nuclear States Do Not Comply with the Non-Proliferation Treaty

By Farhang Jahanpour*

OXFORD (IPS) - Article Six of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) makes it obligatory for nuclear states to get rid of their nuclear weapons as part of a bargain that requires the non-nuclear states not to acquire nuclear weapons. Apart from the NPT provisions, there have been a number of other rulings that have reinforced those requirements.

However, while nuclear states have vigorously pursued a campaign of non-proliferation, they have violated many NPT and other international regulations.

An advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in 1996 stated: "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

Nuclear powers have ignored that opinion.

The nuclear states, especially the United States and Russia, have further violated the Treaty by their efforts to upgrade and diversify their nuclear weapons. The United States has developed the "Reliable Replacement Warhead", a new type of nuclear warhead to extend the viability of its nuclear arsenal.

The United States and possibly Russia are also developing tactical nuclear warheads with lower yields, which can be used on the battlefield without producing a great deal of radiation. Despite U.S. President Barack Obama's pledge to reduce and ultimately abolish nuclear weapons, it has emerged that the United States is in the process of developing new categories of nuclear weapons, including B61-12 at a projected cost of 348 billion dollars over the next decade. India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea cannot be regarded as nuclear states. Since Article 9 of the NPT defines Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) as those that had manufactured and tested a nuclear device prior to

1 January 1967, it is not possible for India, Pakistan, Israel or North Korea to be regarded as nuclear weapon states.

All those countries are in violation of the NPT, and providing them with nuclear assistance, such as the U.S. agreement with India to supply it with nuclear reactors and advanced nuclear technology, constitutes violations of the Treaty. The same applies to U.S. military cooperation with Israel and Pakistan.

Nuclear states are guilty of proliferation

Paragraph 14 of the binding U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 that called for the disarmament of Iraq also specified the establishment of a zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) in the Middle East.

It was clearly understood by all the countries that joined the U.S.-led coalition to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait that after the elimination of Iraqi WMDs, Israel would be required to get rid of its nuclear arsenal. Israel – and by extension the countries that have not implemented that paragraph – have violated that binding resolution. Indeed, both the United States and Israel are believed to maintain nuclear weapons in the region.

During the apartheid era, Israel and South Africa collaborated in manufacturing nuclear weapons, with Israel leading the way. In 2010 it was reported that "the 'top secret' minutes of meetings between senior officials from the two countries in 1975 show that South Africa's Defence Minister P.W. Botha asked for nuclear warheads and the then Israeli Defence Minister Shimon Peres responded by offering them 'in three sizes'."

The documents were uncovered by an American academic, Sasha Polakow-Suransky, in research for a book on the close relationship between the two

countries. Israeli officials tried hard to prevent the publication of those documents. In 1977, South Africa signed a pact with Israel that included the manufacturing of at least six nuclear bombs.

The 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference also called for "the early establishment by regional parties of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other WMDs and their delivery systems". The international community has ignored these resolutions by not pressing Israel to give up its nuclear weapons. Indeed, any call for a nuclear free zone in the Middle East has been opposed by Israel and the United States.

The 2000 NPT Review Conference called on "India, Israel and Pakistan to accede to the Treaty as Non-Nuclear Weapons States (NNWS) promptly and without condition". States Parties also agreed to "make determined efforts" to achieve universality. Since 2000, little effort has been made to encourage India, Pakistan or Israel to accede as NNWS.

The declaration agreed by the Iranian government and visiting European Union foreign ministers (from Britain, France and Germany) that reached an agreement on Iran's accession to the Additional Protocol and suspension of its enrichment for more than two years also called for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction throughout the Middle East.

The three foreign ministers made the following commitment: "They will cooperate with Iran to promote security and stability in the region including the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in accordance with the objectives of the United Nations." Twelve years after signing that declaration, the three European countries and the international community have failed to bring about a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.



While, during the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) refused to rule out first use of nuclear weapons due to the proximity of Soviet forces to European capitals, this policy has not been revised since the end of the Cold War. There have been repeated credible reports that the Pentagon has been considering the use of nuclear bunker-buster weapons to destroy Iran's nuclear sites.

For the past 2,000 years and more, mankind has tried to define the requirements of a just war. During the past few decades, some of these principles have been enshrined in legally-binding international agreements and conventions. They include the Covenant of the

League of Nations after the First World War, the 1928 Pact of Paris, and the Charter of the United Nations.

A few ideas are common to all these definitions, namely that any military action should be based on self-defence, be in compliance with international law, be proportionate, be a matter of last resort, and not target civilians and non-combatants.

Other ideas flow from these: the emphasis on arbitration and the renunciation of first resort to force in the settlement of disputes, and the principle of collective self-defence. It is difficult to see how the use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with any of these requirements. Yet, despite many international calls for

nuclear disarmament, nuclear states have refused to abide by the NPT regulations and get rid of their nuclear weapons.

In his first major foreign policy speech in Prague on 5 April 2009, President Barack Obama spoke about his vision of getting rid of nuclear weapons. He said: "The existence of thousands of nuclear weapons is the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War... Today, the Cold War has disappeared but thousands of those weapons have not. In a strange turn of history, the threat of global nuclear war has gone down, but the risk of a nuclear attack has gone up."

He went on to say: "So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons..."

Sadly, those noble sentiments have not been put into action. On the contrary, all nuclear powers have continued to strengthen and modernise their nuclear arsenals. While they have been vigorous in punishing, on a selective basis, the countries that were suspected of developing nuclear weapons, they have not lived up to their side of the bargain to get rid of their nuclear weapons.

(IPS | 5 September 2015)

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Photo: Farhang Jahanpour



‘Generation of Change’ Pleads for Walking the Nuclear Abolition Talk

By Ronald Joshua

HIROSHIMA (IDN) - A new ‘Generation of Change’ is making its presence felt, pledging to walk the talk over the last 70 years in a clarion call for freeing the world of 16,000 to 17,000 nuclear weapons that continue “to threaten every single person with the prospect of a cruel and inhumane death”.

Concluding a three-day International Youth Summit on Nuclear Abolition in Hiroshima, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings that razed Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the ground, the pledge stated on August 30: “Nuclear weapons are a symbol of a bygone age; a symbol that poses eminent threat to our present reality and has no place in the future we are creating.”

The Youth Summit followed on the heels of the 25th UN Conference on Disarmament Issues in Hiroshima, organised by the Bangkok-based United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD).

The Summit brought together 30 key youth activists on nuclear disarmament from more than 20 countries – including Austria, Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, India,

Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Thailand, Tunisia, UK and the USA – who are actively engaged in nuclear disarmament and related fields at the local, regional and international levels.

They also met with survivors of the atomic bombing (hibakusha) and discussed future strategies aimed at ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

The pledge concludes: "We, the Generation of Change, invite you to join us as we raise our collective voice to call for action; we refuse to stand by while nuclear weapons continue to threaten our lives and future generations. Join us, take action and create change!"

Participants argued that for 70 years speeches have been made, statements issued and endorsed saying "never again". And yet we are still held hostage by nuclear weapons. "We, youth around the world, are mustering the courage to stand up and fulfill these decades-old promises of abolition. We need to eliminate this threat to our shared future and we urge you to join us, the Generation of Change. It is time to take action."

The pledge goes on to state: "We, youth seek human security and sustainability, which are impossible to achieve fully in the presence of nuclear weapons. Youth see the potential for a world without nuclear weapons – we see the potential for security not to be based on fear and more militarism, but on diplomacy, cooperation and trust.

"Abolishing nuclear weapons is our responsibility; it is our right and we will no longer sit by while the opportunity of nuclear abolition is squandered. We, youth in all our diversity and in deep solidarity pledge to realize this goal. We are the Generation of Change."

"The continued existence of nuclear weapons," says the pledge, "is unacceptable and action must be taken to protect our shared future."

Therefore, as the Generation of Change, they vow to:

- Continue to educate and empower ourselves in order to better spread this awareness amongst our peers;
- Recognize that diversity in this work is important and work to educate ourselves on how gender impacts disarmament
- Take action, raise our voices and pursue nuclear abolition in our communities and our countries;
- Share our knowledge about the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the experiences of hibakushas
- Encourage others to join the nuclear abolition movement and establish a strong unity among all nuclear abolition campaigners.
- Call upon every State to start negotiations on an international treaty for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons;
- Call on our elected representatives to adopt national legislation prohibiting and criminalizing the manufacture, investment in, testing, deployment, threat or use of nuclear weapons.

The pledge was issued at a wider public forum joined by 250 participants at which summit co-chairs Rick Wayman of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF) and Anna Ikeda of Soka Gakkai International (SGI) presented the Youth Pledge to Ahmad Alhendawi, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

Alhendawi urged, "Let's be the generation that makes peace possible. This youth summit is sending a strong message to the world, that the youth are for peace and for a nuclear-free-world, and the world must listen."

The public forum also featured a film made by atomic bomb survivor Masaaki Tanabe, whose childhood home stood right next to the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima. He said, "Seeing my film, I hope that you really understood that these were real lives, people, genuine human beings. I want the world's leaders to know this truth."

Youth participants said the summit had deepened their sense of urgency. Erin Hunt of Mines Action Canada (MAC) commented: "This network of young people who now have this shared experience of knowing what these weapons can do – I think is very, very important."

Messages of support were received from peace activists including NAPF President David Krieger, International Institute on Peace Education Founder Betty Reardon, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) Executive Director Michael Christ.

The event was coordinated by representatives, among others, of ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons), MAC, NAPF, SGI and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

Cosponsors included the City of Hiroshima, the City of Nagasaki, Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, PCU Nagasaki Council, Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Mayors for Peace, ICAN, IPPNW, the Basel Peace Office, Global Zero and Ban All Nukes generation (BANg).

Nobuyuki Asai, program coordinator for peace affairs of the SGI, a socially-engaged Buddhist network with 12 million members around the world that promotes peace, culture and education that has been campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons for over 50 years, said:

"Youth have intrinsic potential and capacity to change the status quo. The world stands at a critical juncture as we are marking the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is the time for young people around the world to unite together, to make a breakthrough toward a world without nuclear weapons."

[IDN-InDepthNews – 31 August 2015]

Photo: Witness in Hiroshima film

Credit: International Press Syndicate

Disarmament Conference Ends with Ambitious Goal – But How to Get There?



By Ramesh Jaura

HIROSHIMA (IPS) - A three-day landmark U.N. Conference on Disarmament Issues has ended here – one day ahead of the International Day Against Nuclear Tests – stressing the need for ushering in a world free of nuclear weapons, but without a consensus on how to move towards that goal.

The Aug. 26-28 conference, organised by the Bangkok-based United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Japan and the city and Prefecture of Hiroshima, was attended by more than 80 government officials and experts, also from beyond the region.

It was the twenty-fifth annual meeting of its kind held in Japan, which acquired a particular importance against the backdrop of the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the founding of the United Nations.

Summing up the deliberations, UNRCPD Director Yuriy Kryvonos said the discussions on “the opportunities and challenges in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation” had been “candid and dynamic”.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference from Apr. 27 to May 22 at the U.N. headquarters drew the focus in presentations and panel discussions.

Ambassador Taous Feroukhi of Algeria, who presided over the NPT Review Conference, explained at length why the gathering had failed to agree on a universally acceptable draft final text, despite a far-reaching consensus on a wide range of crucial issues: refusal of the United States, Britain and Canada to accept the proposal for convening a conference by Mar. 1, 2016, for a Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

Addressing the issue, Japan’s Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida joined several government officials and experts in expressing his regrets that the draft final document was not adopted due to the issue of WMDs.

Kishida noted that the failure to establish a new Action Plan at the Review Conference had led to a debate over the viability of the NPT. “However,” he added, “I would like to make one thing crystal clear. The NPT regime has

played an extremely important role for peace and stability in the international community; a role that remains unchanged even today.”

The Hiroshima conference not only discussed divergent views on measures to preserve the effective implementation of the NPT, but also the role of the yet-to-be finalised Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in achieving the goal of elimination of nuclear weapons, humanitarian consequences of the use of atomic weapons, and the significance of nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZs) for strengthening the non-proliferation regime and nuclear disarmament.

Speakers attached particular attention to the increasing role of local municipalities, civil society and nuclear disarmament education, including testimonies from ‘hibakusha’ (survivors of atomic bombings mostly in their 80s and above) in consolidating common understanding of the threat posed by nuclear weapons for people from all countries around the world regardless whether or not their governments possess nuclear weapons.

UNRCPD Director Kryvonos said the Hiroshima conference had given “a good start for searching new fresh ideas on how we should move towards our goal – protecting our planet from a risk of using nuclear weapons.”

Hiroshima Prefecture Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki, the city’s Mayor Karzumi Matsui – son of a ‘hibakusha’ father and president of the Mayors for Peace organisation comprising 6,779 cities in 161 countries and regions – as well as his counterpart from Nagasaki, Tomihisa Taue, pleaded for strengthening a concerted campaign for a nuclear free world. Taue is also the president of the National Council of Japan’s Nuclear-Free Local Authorities.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki city leaders welcomed suggestions for a nuclear disarmament summit next year in Hiroshima, which they said would lend added thrust to awareness raising for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Though foreign ministry officials refused to identify themselves publicly with the proposal, Japan’s Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, who hails from Hiroshima, emphasised the need for nuclear-weapon and non-

nuclear weapon states to “work together in steadily advancing practical and concrete measures in order to make real progress in nuclear disarmament.”

Kishida said that Japan will submit a “new draft resolution on the total elimination of nuclear weapons” to the forthcoming meeting of the U.N. General Assembly. Such a resolution, he said, was “appropriate to the 70th year since the atomic bombings and could serve as guidelines for the international community for the next five years, on the basis of the Review Conference”.

The next NPT Review Conference is expected to be held in 2020.

Mayors for Peace has launched a 2020 Vision Campaign as the main vehicle for advancing their agenda – a nuclear-weapon-free world by the year 2020.

The campaign was initiated on a provisional basis by the Executive Cities of Mayors for Peace at their meeting in Manchester, Britain, in October 2003. It was launched under the name ‘Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons’ in November of that year at the 2nd Citizens Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons held in Nagasaki, Japan.

In August 2005, the World Conference endorsed continuation of the campaign under the title of the ‘2020 Vision Campaign’.

Foreign Minister Kishida expressed the views of the inhabitants of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki when he pointed out in a message to the UNRCPD conference: “... the reality of atomic bombings is far from being sufficiently understood worldwide.”

He added: “In order to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, it is extremely important for political leaders, young people and others worldwide to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki and see for themselves the reality of atomic bombings. Through this, I am convinced that we will be able to share our aspirations for a world free of nuclear weapons.”

(IPS | 28 August 2015)

Photo: Cloud from an atmospheric nuclear test conducted by the United States at Enewetak Atoll, Marshall Islands, in November 1952.

Credit: US Government

Call for Global Ban on Nuclear Weapons Testing

By Katsuhiro Asagiri and Ramesh Jaura

HIROSHIMA (IPS) - As the international community gears up to commemorate the 20th anniversary next year of the opening up of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for signature, a group of eminent persons (GEM) has launched a concerted campaign for entry into force of a global ban on nuclear weapon testing.

GEM, which was set up by Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the September 2013 Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) at the United Nations headquarters in New York, met on Aug. 24-25 in Hiroshima, a modern city on Japan's Honshu Island, which was largely destroyed by an atomic bomb during the Second World War in 1945.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the only two cities in the world which have suffered the devastating and brutal atomic bombs that brought profound suffering to innocent children, women and men, the tales of which continue to be told by the 'hibakusha' (survivors of atomic bombings).

"There is nowhere other than this region where the urgency of achieving the Treaty's entry into force is



more evident, and there is no group better equipped with the experience and expertise to help further this cause than the Group of Eminent Persons,” CTBTO Executive Secretary Zerbo told participants.

The GEM is a high-level group comprising eminent personalities and internationally recognised experts whose aim is to promote the global ban on nuclear weapons testing, support and complement efforts to promote the entry into force of the Treaty, as well as reinvigorate international endeavours to achieve this goal.

The two-day meeting was hosted by the government of Japan and the city of Hiroshima, where CTBTO Executive Secretary Zerbo participated in the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing early August.

On the eve of the meeting, Zerbo joined former United States Secretary of Defence and GEM Member William Perry and Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki as a panellist in a public lecture on nuclear disarmament which was attended by around 100 persons, including many students.

In an opening statement, Zerbo urged global leaders to use the momentum created by the recently reached agreement between the E3+3 (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the United States) and Iran to inject a much needed dose of hope and positivity in the current discussions on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

“What the Iran deal teaches us is that multilateralism in arms control and international security is not only possible, but the most effective way of addressing the complex and multi-layered challenges of the 21st century. [It] also teaches us that the measure of worth in any security agreement or arms control treaty is in the credibility of its verification provisions. As with the Iran deal, the utility of the CTBT must be judged on the

effectiveness of its verification and enforcement mechanisms. In this area, there can be no question,” Zerbo said.

Also speaking at the opening session, Perry expressed his firm belief that ratification of the CTBT served U.S. national interests, not only at the international level but also at the strictly domestic level for national security measures. He considered that the current geopolitical climate constituted a risk for the prospects of entry into force and reiterated the importance of maintaining the moratoria on nuclear testing.

Participating GEM members included Nobuyasu Abe, former U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Japan; Des Browne, former Secretary of State for Defence, United Kingdom; Jayantha Dhanapala, former U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs; Sérgio Duarte, former U.N. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Brazil; Michel Duclos, Senior Counsellor to the Policy Planning Department at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Wolfgang Hoffmann, former Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, Germany; Ho-Jin Lee, Ambassador, Republic of Korea; and William Perry, former Secretary of Defence, United States.

István Mikola, Minister of State, Hungary; Yusron Ihza Mahendra, Ambassador of Indonesia to Japan; Mitsuru Kitano, Permanent Representative, Ambassador of Japan to the International Organisations in Vienna; and Yerzhan N. Ashikbayev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kazakhstan, participated as ex-officio members.

The GEM took stock of the Plan of Action agreed in its meetings in New York (Sep. 2013), Stockholm (Apr. 2014) and Seoul (Jun. 2015). The Group considered the current international climate and determined that, with the upcoming 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, there was an urgency to unite the international

community in support of preventing the proliferation and further development of nuclear weapons with the aim of their total elimination.

Participants in the meeting discussed a wide range of relevant issues and debated practical measures that could be undertaken to further advance the entry into force of the Treaty, especially in the run-up to the Article XIV Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the CTBT, which will take place at the end of September in New York, with Japan and Kazakhstan as co-chairs.

One hundred and eighty-three countries have signed the Treaty, of which 163 have also ratified it, including three of the nuclear weapon states: France, Russia and the United Kingdom. But 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries must sign and ratify before the CTBT can enter into force. Of these, eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign the CTBT.

The GEM adopted the Hiroshima Declaration, which reaffirmed the group’s commitment to achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons and, in particular, to the entry into force of the CTBT as “one of the most essential practical measures for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation”, and, among others, called for “a multilateral approach to engage the leadership of the remaining . . . eight States with the aim of facilitating their respective ratification processes.”

The GEM called on “political leaders, governments, civil society and the international scientific community to raise awareness of the essential role of the CTBT in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and in the prevention of the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons for humankind.”

(IPS | 27 August 2015)

Photo: Group of CTBTO Eminent Persons in Hiroshima
Credit: CTBTO

Hiroshima and Nagasaki Mayors Plead for a Nuclear Weapons Free World

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN/TOKYO (IPS) - Seventy years after the brutal and militarily unwarranted atomic bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Aug. 6 and 9, a nuclear weapons free world is far from within reach.

Commemorating the two events, the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki made impassioned pleas for heeding the experiences of the survivors of the atomic bombings and the growing worldwide awareness of the compelling need for complete abolition of such weapons.

The atomic bombings in 1945 destroyed the two cities, and more than 200,000 people died of nuclear radiation, shockwaves from the blasts and thermal radiation. Over 400,000 have died since the end of the war, from the after-effects of the bombs.

As of Mar. 31, 2015, the Japanese government had recognised 183,519 as 'hibakusha' (explosion-affected people), most of them living in Japan. Japan's Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Law defines hibakusha as people who were: within a few kilometres of the hypocentres of the bombs; within 2 km of the hypocentres within two weeks of the bombings; exposed to radiation from fallout; or not yet born but carried by pregnant women in any of these categories.

During the commemorative events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, reports in several newspapers confirmed that those bombings were militarily unwarranted.

Gar Alperovitz, formerly Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, wrote in *The Nation* that that "the war was won before Hiroshima – and the generals who dropped the bomb knew it."

He quoted Adm. William Leahy, President Harry S. Truman's Chief of Staff, who wrote in his 1950 memoir

'I Was There' [that] "the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender ..."

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, the U.S. president from 1953 until 1961, shared this view. He was a five-star general in the United States Army during World War II and served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe.

Eisenhower stated in his memoirs that when notified by Secretary of War Henry Stimson of the decision to use atomic weapons, he "voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary."

Even the famous "hawk" Maj. Gen. Curtis LeMay, head of the Twenty-First Bomber Command, went public the month after the bombing, telling the press that "the atomic bomb had nothing to do with the end of the war at all," wrote Alperovitz.

"The peoples of this world must unite or they will perish," warned Robert Oppenheimer, widely considered the father of the bomb, as he called on politicians to place the terrifying power of the atom under strict international control.

Oppenheimer's call has yet to be followed.

In his fervent address on Aug. 6, Kazumi Matsui, mayor of the City of Hiroshima, said: "Our world still bristles with more than 15,000 nuclear weapons, and policy-makers in the nuclear-armed states remain trapped in provincial thinking, repeating by word and deed their nuclear intimidation."

He added: "We now know about the many incidents and accidents that have taken us to the brink of nuclear war or nuclear explosions. Today, we worry as well about nuclear terrorism."

As long as nuclear weapons exist, he warned, anyone could become a hibakusha at any time. If that happens, the damage would reach indiscriminately beyond national borders. "People of the world, please listen carefully to the words of the hibakusha and, profoundly accepting the spirit of Hiroshima, contemplate the nuclear problem as your own," he exhorted.

As president of Mayors for Peace, comprising mayors from more than 6,700 member cities, Kazumi Matsui vowed: "Hiroshima will act with determination, doing everything in our power to accelerate the international trend toward negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention and abolition of nuclear weapons by 2020."

This, he said, was the first step toward nuclear weapons abolition. The next step would be to create, through the trust thus won, broadly versatile security systems that do not depend on military might.

"Working with patience and perseverance to achieve those systems will be vital, and will require that we promote throughout the world the path to true peace revealed by the pacifism of the Japanese Constitution," he added.

"We call on the Japanese government, in its role as bridge between the nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states, to guide all states toward these discussions, and we offer Hiroshima as the venue for dialogue and outreach," the mayor of Hiroshima said.

In the Nagasaki Peace Declaration issued on Aug. 9, Nagasaki mayor Tomihisa Taue asked the Japanese government and Parliament to "fix your sights on the future, and please consider a conversion from a 'nuclear umbrella' to a 'non-nuclear umbrella'."

Japan does not possess any atomic weapons and is protected, like South Korea and Germany, as well as most of the NATO member states, by the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

He appealed to the Japanese government to explore national security measures, which do not rely on nuclear deterrence. “The establishment of a ‘Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NEA-NWFZ),’ as advocated by researchers in America, Japan, Korea, China, and many other countries, would make this possible,” he said.

Referring to the Japanese Parliament “currently deliberating a bill, which will determine how our country guarantees its security”, he said: “There is widespread unease and concern that the oath which was engraved onto our hearts 70 years ago and the peaceful ideology of the Constitution of Japan are now wavering. I urge the Government and the Diet to listen to these voices of unease and concern, concentrate their wisdom, and conduct careful and sincere deliberations.”

The Nagasaki Peace Declaration noted that the peaceful ideology of the Constitution of Japan was born from painful and harsh experiences, and from reflection on the war. “Since the war, our country has walked the path of a peaceful nation. For the sake of Nagasaki, and for the sake of all of Japan, we must never change the peaceful principle that we renounce war,” the declaration said.

The Nagasaki mayor regretted that the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held at the United Nations earlier this year had struggled with reaching agreement on a Final Document.

However, said Taue, the efforts of those countries which were attempting to ban nuclear weapons had made possible a draft Final Document “which incorporated steps towards nuclear disarmament.”

He urged the heads of NPT member states not to

allow the NPT Review Conference “to have been a waste”. Instead, they should continue their efforts to debate a legal framework, such as a ‘Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC),’ at every opportunity, including at the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Many countries at the Review Conference were in agreement that it was important to visit the atomic-bombed cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Against this backdrop, the Nagasaki mayor appealed to “President [Barack] Obama, heads of state, including the heads of the nuclear weapon states, and all the people of the world ... (to) please come to Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and see for yourself exactly what happened under those mushroom clouds 70 years ago.”

No U.S. president has ever attended the any event to commemorate the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller was the highest-ranking U.S. official at the Aug. 6 ceremony. She was reported as saying that nuclear weapons should never be used again.

(IPS | 10 August 2015)

Photo: The mayor of Nagasaki, Tomihisa Taue, presents the Nagasaki Peace Declaration, saying that “rather than envisioning a nuclear-free world as a faraway dream, we must quickly decide to solve this issue by working towards the abolition of these weapons, fulfilling the promise made to global society”.

Credit: YouTube



Learning from Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic Bombings

By Katsuhiro Asagiri*

TOKYO (IDN) - In a message to the Peace Memorial Ceremony, to mark the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon echoed the ardent wish of the survivors of nuclear assault, when he called for "urgent action to eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all".

Evoking the first resolution by the UN General Assembly, which reflected the international community's concern about the use of atomic weapons, he urged states to honour the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by realising the "vision of a nuclear-weapons-free world".

He recalled that towards the end of World War II, on August 6 and 9, 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The two cities were destroyed and more than 200,000 people died of nuclear radiation, shockwaves from the blasts and thermal radiation. Over 400,000 have died since the end of the war, from the after-effects of the bombs.

The Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki shared Ban's views. They are keen that the younger generation keeps alive the memory of what transpired 70 years ago.

They also want the nuclear power states to abandon all nuclear weapons and Japan – as the only country to have suffered the havoc caused by atomic bombs – to act as a bridge between nuclear and non-nuclear states.

Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue pointed out that most of Japan's population was made up of the post-war generation. The memories of war were fast fading from the society.

In view of this, he said: "We must not forget the atomic bomb experiences of those in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Neither should we forget the air raids, which destroyed Tokyo and many other cities, the

Battle of Okinawa, nor the many people of Asia who suffered because of this tragic war. Now, 70 years on, it is vital that we continue to pass on those memories."

He asked those who experienced the atomic bomb and the war in Japan and across the globe to speak of their experiences, and not allow those memories to fade.

Addressing the young generation, he said: "I ask that you do not push wartime experiences aside saying that they are stories of the past. Understand that the wartime generation tell you their stories because what they speak of could, in the future, happen to you as well. Therefore, please inherit their wish for peace."

He added: "Listen to stories of the war, sign petitions for nuclear abolition, and visit atomic bomb exhibitions. Together, these individual actions can create a much larger power."

The Nagasaki Declaration on August 9 also highlighted the significant role the youth play: "In Nagasaki, the younger generation, which includes second and third generation hibakusha, are inheriting the wish for peace and are taking action. Our individual strengths are the greatest power in realizing a world without war and without nuclear weapons. The power of civil society is the power to move governments, and to move the world."

Hibakusha is the Japanese word for nuclear "explosion-affected people", who survived the atomic bombings.

By March 2015, the Japanese government had recognised 183,519 as hibakusha, most living in Japan. Japan's Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Law defines hibakusha as people who were: within a few kilometers of the hypocenters of the bombs; within 2 km of the hypocenters within two weeks of the bombings; exposed to radiation from fallout; or not yet born but carried by pregnant women in any of these categories.

Describing the state of the hibakusha, Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of the City of Hiroshima, said: "Those who managed to survive, their lives grotesquely distorted, were left to suffer serious physical and emotional aftereffects compounded by discrimination and prejudice. Children stole or fought routinely to survive. A young boy rendered an A-bomb orphan still lives alone; a wife was divorced when her exposure was discovered. The suffering continues."

Trapped in provincial thinking

Against this backdrop, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Mayors appealed for doing away with all nuclear weapons that are tools of mass destruction.

The Hiroshima Mayor Matsui pointed out that while the world was bristling with more than 15,000 nuclear weapons, policymakers in the nuclear-armed states remained trapped in "provincial thinking, repeating by word and deed their nuclear intimidation".

This attitude persisted despite the fact that the international community was fully aware of "the many incidents and accidents that have taken us to the brink of nuclear war or nuclear explosions". Meanwhile nuclear terrorism was also a source of great concern.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, he warned, anyone could become a hibakusha at any time. If that happens, the damage would reach indiscriminately beyond national borders. "People of the world, please listen carefully to the words of the hibakusha and, profoundly accepting the spirit of Hiroshima, contemplate the nuclear problem as your own," he exhorted.

Matsui is president of the Mayors for Peace, a global grouping comprising more than 6,700 member cities. He assured: "Hiroshima will act with determination, doing everything in our power to accelerate the international trend toward negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention and abolition of nuclear weapons by 2020."

This, he said, was the first step toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. The next step would be to create broadly versatile security systems that do not depend on military might but are based on mutual trust.

“Working with patience and perseverance to achieve those systems will be vital, and will require that we promote throughout the world the path to true peace pursued by the pacifism of the Japanese Constitution,” he added.

The Hiroshima Mayor called upon the Japanese government, in its role “as bridge between the nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states, to guide all states toward these discussions”.

Hiroshima has offered itself as the venue for dialogue and outreach.

Fix sights on the future

The Nagasaki Mayor Taue exhorted the Japanese Government and Parliament to fix their sights on the future, and consider a conversion from a ‘nuclear umbrella’ to a ‘non-nuclear umbrella’.

Like South Korea and Germany, and most of the NATO member states, Japan does not possess any atomic weapons and is protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Taue appealed to the Japanese Government to explore national security measures, which do not rely on nuclear deterrence. “The establishment of a ‘North-east Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NEA-NWFZ),’ as advocated by researchers in America, Japan, Korea, China, and many other countries, would make this possible,” he said.

Referring to the Japanese Parliament “currently deliberating a bill, which will determine how our country guarantees its security”, he said: “There is widespread unease and concern that the oath which was engraved onto our hearts 70 years ago and the peaceful ideology of the Constitution of Japan are now wavering. I urge the Government and the Diet to listen

to these voices of unease and concern, concentrate their wisdom, and conduct careful and sincere deliberations.”

The peaceful ideology of the Constitution of Japan, the Nagasaki Peace Declaration said, was born from painful and harsh experiences, and from reflection upon the war. “Since the war, our country has walked the path of a peaceful nation. For the sake of Nagasaki, and for the sake of all of Japan, we must never change the peaceful principle that we renounce war,” the declaration added.

The Nagasaki Mayor regretted that in the ‘Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)’ had ended without the adoption of a Final Document. However, the efforts of those countries, which were attempting to ban nuclear weapons, made possible a draft Final Document which incorporated steps towards nuclear disarmament,” he noted.

He urged the heads of the NPT member states not to allow the NPT Review Conference “to have been a waste”. Instead, they should avail of every opportunity to continue their efforts to debate a legal framework, such as a ‘Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC),’ at every opportunity, also in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Many countries at the Review Conference were in agreement that it is important to visit the atomic-bombed cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Against this backdrop, the Nagasaki Mayor appealed to: “President Obama, heads of state, including the heads of the nuclear weapon states, and all the people of the world . . . (to) please come to Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and see for yourself exactly what happened under those mushroom clouds 70 years ago.”

No U.S. President has since 1945 ever attended any

event to commemorate the atomic bombings of Hiroshima. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller was the highest-ranking U.S. official at August 6 ceremony. She was reported saying that nuclear weapons should never be used again.

Widespread view in the U.S. is that the atomic bombings were necessary to bring Japan down to its knees and end the Second World War. But this view is being increasingly challenged, evoking the criticism, among others, of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, the U.S. President from 1953 until 1961, and a five-star general in the United States Army during World War II, who served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, Eisenhower stated in his memoirs that when notified by Secretary of War Henry Stimson of the decision to use atomic weapons, he “voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary”.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 9 August 2015]

No More Hiroshimas, No More Nagasakis, Vows U.N. Chief

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - Speaking at a commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a vociferous advocate of nuclear disarmament, echoed the rallying cry worldwide: "No more Hiroshimas, No more Nagasakis."

Providing grim figures, he said more than 200,000 people died of nuclear radiation, shock waves from the blasts, and thermal radiation from the bombing of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, and of Nagasaki three days later.

Additionally, over 400,000 more people have died – and are continuing to die – since the end of the Second World War from the impacts of the attacks.

"As you keep the memory of the bombing alive, so too, must the international community persist until we have ensured that nuclear weapons are eliminated," he said Thursday.

Ban said the United Nations, since its establishment 70 years ago, has been seeking to eliminate weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

The U.N. General Assembly's first resolution, adopted in January 1946, set the goal of eliminating all WMDs.

"Until I realise this goal, I will continue to use every opportunity to raise global awareness about the dangers of nuclear weapons and demand an urgent international response," he vowed.

Alice Slater, New York director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and who serves on the Coordinating Committee of Abolition 2000, told IPS: "On this fateful day, 70 years ago, the first of the only two atomic bombs ever used was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, with a second catastrophic detonation wreaked on Nagasaki on Aug. 9, killing over 220,000 people by the end of 1945, with many tens of thousands of more dying from radiation poisoning and its lethal after effects over the years."

Yet despite these horrendous cataclysms in Japan, there are still 16,000 nuclear weapons on the planet, all but 1,000 of them held by the U.S. and Russia, she pointed out.

"Our legal structures to control and eliminate the bomb are in tatters, as the five recognized nuclear weapons states in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—the U.S., UK, Russia, France, China—cling to their nuclear deterrents, asserting they are needed for their 'security' despite the promises they made in 1970, 45 long years ago, to make good faith efforts to eliminate their nuclear arms," she added.

This "security" in the form of nuclear "deterrence" is extended by the United States to many more countries in the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) nuclear alliances, as well as to the Pacific states of Japan, Australia, and South Korea.

Non-NPT states, India, Pakistan and Israel, as well as North Korea which left the NPT, taking advantage of its Faustian bargain for "peaceful" nuclear power, to make nuclear weapons similarly claim their reliance on nuclear "deterrence" for their security, Slater said.

She said the rest of the world is appalled, not only at the lack of progress to fulfill promises for nuclear disarmament, but the constant modernization and "improvement" of nuclear arsenals with the U.S. announcing a plan to spend one trillion dollars over the next 30 years for two new bomb factories, delivery systems and warheads, having just tested a dummy nuclear bunker-buster warhead last month in Nevada, its B-61-12 nuclear gravity bomb.

In Northern California, peace advocates marked the 70th anniversary at the Livermore Lab, where the U.S. is presently spending billions of dollars to create new and modified nuclear weapons.

The Lawrence Livermore Lab is one of the two national laboratories that have designed every warhead in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile.

In a press advisory, the Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF), a longstanding advocate for nuclear disarmament, said 70 years after the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, preparations for nuclear war are ongoing at the Livermore Lab.

Over 85 percent of the Fiscal Year 2016 budget request for the Lab is dedicated to Nuclear Weapons Activities.

Scientists at Livermore are developing a modified nuclear warhead for a new long-range stand-off weapon to replace the air-launched cruise missile.

Nearly 16,000 nuclear weapons – 94 percent of them held by the U.S. and Russia – continue to pose an intolerable threat to humanity, she said, pointing out that nuclear weapons have again taken center stage on the borderlands of Europe, one of several potential nuclear flashpoints.

Whether a nuclear exchange is initiated by accident, miscalculation or madness, the radiation and soot will know no boundaries.

The statement also said the U.S. plans to spend a trillion dollars over the next 30 years "modernising" its nuclear bombs, warheads, delivery systems and infrastructure to sustain them for decades to come. The human cost is immeasurable—to our health, environment, ethics, and democracy, to our prospects for global peace, and to our confidence in human survival.

"We gather at Livermore Lab to demand that nuclear weapons spending be slashed and redirected to meet human needs. On this 70th anniversary date, we welcome the Iran deal and call on the U.S. government to now lead a process, with a timetable, to achieve the universal elimination of nuclear weapons."

Slater told IPS that at the last NPT Review Conference in May, which broke up when the U.S., UK and Canada refused to agree to an Egyptian proposal for a confer

ence on a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone — made to fulfill a 1995 promise as part of the commitments from the nuclear weapons states for an indefinite extension of the 25 year old NPT — the non- nuclear weapons states took a bold step.

South Africa expressed its outrage at the unacceptable nuclear apartheid apparent in the current “security” system of nuclear haves and have nots—a system holding the whole world hostage to the security doctrine of the few.

In the past two years, after three major conferences with governments and civil society in Norway, Mexico and Austria to examine the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear war, over 100 nations signed up at the end of the NPT to the Austrian government’s Humanitarian Pledge to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

There are now 113 countries willing to move forward to negotiate a prohibition and ban on nuclear weapons to stigmatise and delegitimise these weapons of horror, just at the world has done for chemical and biological weapons. See www.icanw.org

Slater said it is hoped that countries harbouring under their nuclear umbrellas will also be pressured by civil society to give up their alliance with the nuclear devil and join the Humanitarian Pledge.

“This August, as we remember and commemorate around the world the horrendous events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it’s long past time to ban the bomb! Let the talks begin.”

(IPS | 6 August 2015)

Photo: A Hibakusha, one of the survivors of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, speaks at a special event commemorating Disarmament Week in October 2011.

Credit: UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras



Pacific Island Countries Want a World Without Nuclear Weapons

By Neena Bhandari

SYDNEY (IDN) - As political conflicts magnify in the Middle East and North Africa with the spectre of brutal violence from terrorist organisations like ISIS, and the Ukraine crisis reignites the Cold War between the United States, its NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] allies and Russia; it is imperative that nuclear-armed and non-nuclear states together work for total elimination of nuclear weapons. The risk of use of nuclear weapons, by deliberation or accident, leading to total annihilation looms large more than ever before.

Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Island countries have been at the forefront of global efforts to implement the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which represents the only binding multilateral commitment to the goal of complete disarmament by the nuclear-weapon states. But the Ninth Review Conference of the NPT, from April 27 to May 22, which has three main pillars – non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – overwhelmingly reflected the views and interests of the nuclear-armed states and some of their nuclear-dependent allies.

So while the 2015 Review Conference was a step backward from the 2010 Review Conference in nuclear-armed states' commitment to disarmament, it was also a move forward as non-nuclear states steered ahead for disarmament with the signing of the Humanitarian Pledge put forward by Austria. As of July 14, 113 states had signed the Pledge, which commits signatories to work for a new legally binding instrument for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons for their unacceptable humanitarian consequences.

The Humanitarian Pledge has been signed by 10 Pacific Island states - Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu with the exception of Tonga and the Federated States of Micronesia. From 1956 to 1996, the Pacific island countries were unwilling victims of

nuclear weapons testing by the U.S, the U.K and France.

The Republic of Marshall Islands' (RMI) Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tony de Brum, was nine years old in March 1954, when while fishing with his grandfather near the Likiep atoll, he had seen "the ocean, the fish, and the sky turn red following a sudden intense flash that lit the pre-dawn sky and caused a terrifying shock wave". They were 200 miles from ground zero and he can never erase the memory of that fateful day.

RMI has been a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament, highlighting the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of use of nuclear weapons. Between 1946 and 1958, the Marshall Islands sustained significant damage and radiological contamination from 67 U.S. atmospheric nuclear weapons tests. In a landmark case, it has used its history of people suffering displacement, death, and continued health impacts to take the nuclear weapons states to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

De Brum told IDN, "It is time for the non-nuclear states to work together to achieve a new treaty to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. The evidence has been convincing that the nuclear-armed countries, despite their legal obligations, are not prepared at this point to lead the way. Instead, they believe that they have special rights, which they do not, to base their own security on nuclear possession, nuclear threats and potentially nuclear use. In doing so, these countries are undermining their own security as well as the common security of all states and all people".

Someone, who participated in the early Pacific-wide protest movement against nuclear weapons testing and militarisation of the Pacific region, Fiji-based Vanessa Griffen says, "In the Pacific, we have collectively experienced the known and unknown consequences of nuclear weapons use, the push by non-nuclear states for a ban on nuclear weapons is the only sensible,

humane and responsible course of action to take.

Nuclear weapons states should be regarded, collectively, as lawless and flouting international humanitarian standards".

Griffen has been a representative of FemLINKPacific, a feminist Pacific women's media organisation and partner member of International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). She says, "Pacific Island states, with an unusually high experiential qualification for speaking up for nuclear disarmament, are a significant number in the United Nations and should use their statehood collectively and effectively on this global issue of nuclear disarmament".

NPT was indefinitely extended in 1995. Its Article VIII provides that the Treaty be reviewed every five years. The five-yearly review process was to ensure that nuclear-armed states will pursue disarmament as a matter of policy, but in the past five years the nuclear-armed states have pursued costly programmes to modernise their arsenals.

The key findings in the 2015 Yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which assesses the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security, show that "all the nuclear weapon-possessing states are working to develop new nuclear weapon systems and/or upgrade their existing ones". At the start of 2015, nine states – the U.S, Russia, the U.K, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) – possessed approximately 15,850 nuclear weapons, of which 4300 were deployed with operational forces.

Australia doesn't possess nuclear weapons, but it subscribes to the doctrine of extended nuclear deterrence under the U.S alliance, which is seen as key to Australia's national security. Australia has not signed

the Humanitarian Pledge. As a spokesperson for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) told IDN, “We need to create an environment where all countries, including the nuclear-armed states and those who rely on their nuclear umbrellas, believe themselves to be more secure without nuclear weapons”.

Peace, justice and environmental activists, faith-based and civil society organisations, scientific and medical experts, and United Nations agencies have been calling for negotiations to begin immediately on the elimination of nuclear weapons under strict and effective international control.

Deeply immoral

ICAN’s Australia Director Tim Wright, who attended the Ninth Review Conference in New York says, “Throughout the review conference, Australia dragged its feet on disarmament, maintaining that the use of nuclear weapons is legitimate and necessary under certain circumstances. This stance is, in my view, deeply immoral. But I remain hopeful that, sooner or later, the Australian government will join the international mainstream in rejecting nuclear weapons outright. That is what the Australian people expect and demand”.

The landmark nuclear deal signed by the U.S, Russia, the U.K, France, China and Germany with Iran raises new hopes for disarmament. Realising where self-interest lies can change anything in geo-politics. Iran went from being an arch-enemy, almost militarily invaded by the U.S, to a country that the U.S and others had to deal with more respectfully over the matter of Iraq and ISIS.

In October last year, the Australian Defence Minister David Johnstone even said that Australian commandos could work alongside Iranian forces because of what he said was a common interest in stopping ISIS.

Nuclear weapons are a common threat to all of us and

cooperation, even with “enemies”, is possible”, Member of the Board of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Dr Sue Wareham told IDN, adding that “Even Israel must realise that its own nuclear arsenal is a liability, as it is a provocation for other nations in the region to consider acquiring their own”.

Over the last five years, humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons have been the most active area of progress in disarmament diplomacy. New Zealand, as chair of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), was principally responsible for drafting Working Paper 9, which lays out the possible pathways forward for a legal mechanism to implement the nuclear disarmament obligations in NPT Article VI.

Lyndon Burford, a PhD student in International Relations at the University of Auckland, New Zealand says, “New Zealand insists that such discussion is essential, and urgently needed, but that before it has taken place, it would be premature to select one legal framework over any other. NGOs, however, question why New Zealand has not endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge. The failure to endorse the pledge is particularly puzzling given that the rest of the New Agenda Coalition has endorsed it, and that New Zealand has played such a leading role in the humanitarian consequences initiative”.

One of the major obstacles in the total prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons has been the nuclear-armed states’ two set of rules: one for themselves and the other for everyone else. Wareham says, “But a less-recognised impediment is the role played by U.S allies such as Australia, who quietly urge their great ally to maintain its nuclear arsenal while trying to keep up the facade of being at the forefront of disarmament. If a close U.S ally broke ranks and refused “protection” by nuclear weapons, the impact could be enormous”.

Over four decades after the NPT came into force, roughly 1800 nuclear weapons are kept in a state of high operational alert. As Professor Ramesh Thakur, Director, Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament of Australian National University’s Crawford School of Public Policy says, “Perhaps, the NPT has passed its use by date and the world needs to transition to a post-NPT era without endangering the existing global nuclear order that is firmly anchored in the NPT. While non-proliferation obligations are binding, verifiable and enforceable under the NPT, disarmament obligations are not. Three conferences have been held to date on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons, which might point the way to a post-NPT nuclear-weapon-free order now supported by 159 countries”.

Prof. Thakur suggests three options: “First, ban any use of nuclear weapons as it violates the very core of international humanitarian law; secondly, the overwhelming majority of non-nuclear countries could act on their own to ban the possession as well as use of nuclear weapons; and thirdly, the best but most challenging option would be the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention (NWC) on the lines of conventions banning biological and chemical weapons.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 22 July 2015]

Security Council Defies U.S. Lawmakers by Voting on Iran Nuke Deal

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - When all 15 members of the Security Council raised their collective hands to unanimously vote in favour of the nuclear agreement with Iran, they were also defying a cabal of right-wing conservative U.S. politicians who wanted the United Nations to defer its vote until the U.S. Congress makes its own decision on the pact.

By U.N. standards, in a relatively early morning nine a.m. vote on July 20, the Security Council gave its blessings to the international agreement crafted by its five permanent members – the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia, plus Germany (P5+1) – which was finalised in Vienna on July 14 after months of protracted negotiations.

Stephen Zunes, professor of politics and Coordinator of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of San Francisco, told IPS the United States is the only one of the seven signatory countries (P5+1 and Iran) where there is serious opposition to the agreement, which a broad cross-section of strategic analysts worldwide recognise as the best realistically possible.

“Some people just can’t accept the fact that we are in an increasingly pluralistic and complex world in which the United States simply cannot assert its will whenever and wherever it feels like,” he added.

Successful negotiations require compromises from both sides rather than simply capitulation by one side, said Zunes, who has written extensively on the politics of the Security Council.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, one of the prime negotiators of the agreement, responded to demands by some U.S. Congressmen that the United States should take political and diplomatic precedence over the United Nations – even on an agreement that was international, not bilateral.

“It’s presumptuous of some people to suspect that France, Russia, China, Germany and Britain ought to do what the (U.S.) Congress tells them to do,” he said during a TV interview.

“They have the right to have a vote,” he said, “but we prevailed on them to delay the implementation of that vote out of respect for our Congress, so we wouldn’t be jamming them,” Kerry added.

According to the New York Times, Senator Bob Corker, Republican of Tennessee, chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and Senator Benjamin Cardin of Maryland, a ranking Democrat on the panel, sent a joint letter to President Barack Obama on July 16 asking him to postpone the Security Council vote until the U.S. Congress has taken its own decision.

Norman Solomon, executive director of the Washington-based Institute for Public Accuracy, told IPS “it’s often a difficult concept to get across to many members of Congress, but the U.S. government can’t run the world — and sometimes official Washington can’t even run the U.N. Security Council.”

This comes as a shock, or at least an affront, to Republicans and quite a few Democrats on Capitol Hill who may never use the word hegemony but fervently believe that the U.S. is a light onto all nations and should not hide that light under such a dubious bushel as international law, he pointed out.

“In this case, it’s hard to know whether to laugh or scream at the dangerous U.S. congressional arrogance that is seeking to upend the Iran deal,” said Solomon, who is also founder and coordinator of RootsAction.org, an online action group with some 600,000 active supporters.

Historically, U.S. government policies have been responsible for a great deal of nuclear proliferation in the world, he said.

“Washington still won’t officially acknowledge that Israel now possesses nuclear weapons, and U.S. leaders have turned aside from any and all proposals to seek a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East,” said Solomon.

On July 20, the 28-member European Union (EU) also approved the Iran nuclear deal paving the way for the lifting of Europe’s economic sanctions against Tehran.

“It is a balanced deal that means Iran won’t get an atomic bomb,” said French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. “It is a major political deal.”

The permanent representative of Britain to the United Nations, Ambassador Matthew Rycroft, expressed similar sentiments when he said “the world is now a safer place in the knowledge that Iran cannot now build a nuclear bomb.”

Solomon told IPS the United States is among the leading countries that have promulgated commercial nuclear power in dozens of nations, steadfastly denying the reality that nuclear energy for electricity generation is a major pathway for the development of nuclear weapons.

“We have seen no acknowledgement of this fact in Washington’s high places, let alone steps to move the world away from such dangerous nuclear-power extravaganzas,” he said.

The Iran nuclear agreement now on the table is one of the few big diplomatic achievements that the Obama administration can legitimately claim some credit for, he argued.

But many of the most chauvinistic forces in Washington, he noted, are now doing their best to undermine it.

“In the context of the United Nations, as well as in political arenas of the United States, this dynamic should be fully recognised for what it is — a brazen



attempt by, frankly, warmongers in the U.S. Congress to rescue their hopes for war with Iran from the jaws of a peaceful solution.”

After the vote, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Security Council Resolution 2231, adopted July 20, will ensure the enforcement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iran nuclear agreement.

He said it establishes procedures that will facilitate the JCPOA’s implementation, enabling all States to carry out their obligations contained in the Agreement.

“The resolution provides for the eventual removal of all nuclear-related sanctions against Iran. It guarantees that the International Atomic Energy Agency will continue to verify Iran’s compliance with its nuclear-

related commitments under the JCPOA.”

The United Nations, he assured, stands ready to provide whatever assistance is required in giving effect to the resolution.

Zunes told IPS as nuclear treaties between the United States and the Soviets demonstrated, you can be geopolitical rivals and strongly oppose the other’s system of government and still recognise there is such a thing as a win/win solution on arms control.

Most agreements regarding nuclear weapons have required reciprocity, but none of Iran’s nuclear-armed neighbours — Israel, Pakistan, or India — will be required to eliminate or reduce their weapons or become open to inspections despite the fact that they continue to be in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding their nuclear programmes, he added.

And none of the other nuclear powers, including five of the six nations that led the negotiations, will be required to reduce their arsenals either.

“Any notion that Iran could somehow be gaining an unfair advantage through this agreement is utterly absurd,” declared Zunes.

(IPS | 20 July 2015)

Photo: The Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 2231 (2015), following the historic agreement in Vienna last week between the E3+3 (France, Germany and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Union; plus China, Russia and the United States) on one hand, and Iran, on the other, on a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding Iran’s nuclear programme.

Credit: UN Photo

The Myths About the Nuclear Deal With Iran

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The single biggest misunderstanding about the nuclear agreement with Iran is that it is a bilateral deal with the United States. Not true.

The agreement involved the U.N.'s five big powers, namely, the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia, plus Germany (P5+1).

But still, right-wing conservatives and U.S. legislators want to dissect and delegitimise an international agreement, whose clauses include the phased removal of U.N. sanctions on Iran.

The Security Council, where the P5 have veto powers, will meet next week to adopt a resolution and thereby give its blessings to the agreement.

But pro-Israeli groups and some members of the U.S. Congress want it delayed, arguing the United States should take political precedence over the United Nations.

At a press conference early this week, Wendy Sherman, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and a member of the U.S. negotiating team, told reporters: "Well, the way that the U.N. Security Council resolution is structured, there is an interim period of 60 to 90 days that I think will accommodate the congressional review."

And it would have been a little difficult, she said, "when all of the members of the P5+1 wanted to go to the United Nations to get an endorsement of this since it is a product of the United Nations process, for us to say, 'Well, excuse me, the world, you should wait for the United States Congress.'"

"The proof of the Iran nuclear deal will be in its results," Dr Rebecca Johnson, director of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy and member of Princeton University's International Panel on Fissile Materials, told IPS.

"I've spent time talking with American and Iranian scientists, diplomats and also human rights defenders. None of us is naive about the hurdles still to be overcome, and yet we are convinced this agreement is a

positive step forward – and much better than more years of stalemate and hostility," she added.

"But we also have to be honest that preventing nuclear proliferation and promoting human rights doesn't stop with that. We welcome that Iran was one of 112 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) states parties to sign the humanitarian pledge initiated by Vienna this year, to 'fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons'."

Dr Johnson said "multilateral negotiations to ban nuclear weapons as well as efforts to rid the Middle East of all nuclear and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have to keep going forward if we want to avoid further proliferation and nuclear threats in the future."

Responding to the strong negative reactions from Israel, Hillel Schenker, Co-Editor, Palestine-Israel Journal, told IPS that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seems to think the deal between the global powers and Iran is "the end of the world."

His house organ, the Yisrael Hayom freebie, financed by the right-wing Las Vegas-based casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, who is active on both the Israeli and American political playing fields, greeted the deal with the headline "An Eternally Disgraceful Deal".

The leaders of the opposition, on the other hand, have declared that the agreement is a "bad deal", only criticising Netanyahu for ruining Israel's relationship with U.S. President Barack Obama and the U.S. government.

"What we are actually witnessing however is the failure of Netanyahu's policy of fear, and the triumph of President Obama's policy of hope," Schenker added.

He also said, "Netanyahu was nurtured in a home dominated by his father, the late Prof. Benzion Netanyahu, whose analysis of the Spanish Inquisition led him to conclude that no matter what we, the Jews and the Israelis, do, the whole world will continue to be against us, and we can only rely on ourselves."

This approach, he argued, is totally contrary to the

approach of the founding fathers of modern Zionism, all of whom understood the importance of creating alliances with global powers.

Dr M.V. Ramana, a physicist and lecturer at Princeton University's Programme on Science and Global Security and the Nuclear Futures Laboratory, told IPS the confrontation with Iran has been built up with very little evidence open to the public, allowing for all kinds of claims to be made.

"I hope that this deal will put an end to such Iran-bashing. In any case, I think the deal is an important step in the right direction," he said.

The next step is for all the countries in the region to accept the same nuclear limitations as Iran – in particular, Israel, he added.

"It is high time the international community turned its attention to Israel and demand that the country eliminate its nuclear arsenal and the nuclear facilities that allow it to manufacture nuclear weapons," said Dr Ramana, author of "The Power of Promise: Examining Nuclear Energy in India" and a member of the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and the International Panel on Fissile Materials.

Dr Johnson told IPS that negotiations, like baking, involve craft as well as science – getting the timing as well as the ingredients right is crucial.

She said diplomatic persistence made the time right for this deal to be brokered, but Americans, Israelis, Iranians, Arabs, Europeans and the rest of the world have to commit to going forward or it won't succeed.

"Beware of American and Israeli politicians and commentators who claim this agreement will enable Iran to acquire nuclear weapons, or that if the U.S. Congress rejects the deal, more negotiations will deliver a better one," she warned.

"Sticking this non-proliferation pudding back in the oven at a higher heat is more likely to get us all burned."

She said such erroneous claims just feed into the



EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and American Secretary of State John Kerry at the Palais Coburg Hotel, the venue of the nuclear talks in Vienna, Austria on July 9, 2015.
Credit: European External Action Service

hard-line minority in Iran – rump factions close to former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – that would also benefit if this deal is rejected.

“I don’t think those commentators are so naive that they actually believe their criticisms of the deal. They don’t want Iran to come in from the cold because – for whatever political or financial reasons of their own – they have a vested interest in stoking outdated rivalries and continuing to demonise and isolate Iran.”

She also said sanctions are a blunt instrument of coercion, usually causing most harm to the most vulnerable – women and children – and playing into authoritarian cliques who want to suppress human rights and democracy.

“It will be a tragic lost opportunity if these U.S. and Iranian hard-liners succeed in derailing this constructive nuclear agreement,” she declared.

Schenker told IPS said Netanyahu’s entire political career has been based on fear-mongering, and the need for “a strong leader” to confront the dangers.

In the recent election, this was typified by his last minute declaration that “the (Israeli) Arabs are going to the polling stations in droves, being bused-in by left-wingers.”

But during his past three terms, the ultimate source of fear was the threat of the Iranian bomb, which was picturesquely presented at the U.N. General Assembly session two years ago, and with his speech before U.S. Congress last year.

The headline in today’s Ma’ariv daily (Friday, June 17), is that “47 percent of the Israeli public favour a military attack on Iran following the signing of the agreement”, despite the fact that virtually the entire leadership of the Israeli military and security establishment is

opposed to such an attack.

The survey results are clearly the product of the fears generated by Netanyahu and his allies, and much of the mainstream media commentators. However, alternative, calmer voices are also being heard, Schenker noted.

Many Israeli observers wonder why Netanyahu thinks he can still go against the entire international community, with the aid of his Republican allies in the U.S., given that they have no chance to overturn a presidential veto of any obstructionist resolution that they may pass.

As President Clinton once said after his first meeting with Netanyahu back in 1996, “Who does he think he is? Who’s the superpower here?”

(IPS | 17 July 2015)

Perfecting Detection of the Bomb

By Ramesh Jaura

VIENNA (IPS) - An international conference has highlighted advances made in detecting nuclear explosions, tracking storms or clouds of volcanic ash, locating epicentres of earthquakes, monitoring the drift of huge icebergs, observing the movements of marine mammals, and detecting plane crashes.



The five-day 'Science and Technology 2015 Conference' (SnT2015), which ended Jun. 26, was the fifth in a series of multi-disciplinary conferences organised by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), which has been based in the Austrian capital since 1997.

The conference was attended by more than 1100

scientists and other experts, policy makers and representatives of national agencies, independent academic research institutions and civil society organisations from around the world.

SnT2015 drew attention to an important finding of CTBTO sensors: the meteor that exploded over Chelyabinsk, Russia, in 2013 was the largest to hit Earth in at least a century.

Participants also heard that the Air Algérie flight between Burkina Faso and Algeria which crashed in Mali in July 2014 was detected by the CTBTO's monitoring station in Cote d'Ivoire, 960 kilometres from the impact of the aircraft.

The importance of SnT2015 lies in the fact that CTBTO is tasked with campaigning for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which outlaws nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere: on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground.

It also aims to develop reliable tools to make sure that no nuclear explosion goes undetected.

These include seismic, hydro-acoustic, infrasound (frequencies too low to be heard by the human ear), and radionuclide sensors. Scientists and other experts demonstrated and explained in presentations and posters how the four state-of-the-art technologies work in practice.

170 seismic stations monitor shockwaves in the Earth, the vast majority of which are caused by earthquakes. But man-made explosions such as mine explosions or the announced North Korean nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013 have also been detected.

CTBTO's 11 hydro-acoustic stations "listen" for sound waves in the oceans. Sound waves from explosions can travel extremely far underwater. Sixty infrasound stations on the Earth's surface can detect ultra-low frequency sound waves that are emitted by large explosions.

CTBTO's 80 radionuclide stations measure the atmosphere for radioactive particles; 40 of them also pick up noble gas, the "smoking gun" from an underground nuclear test. Only these measurements can give a clear indication as to whether an explosion detected by the other methods was actually nuclear or not. Sixteen laboratories support radionuclide stations.

When complete, CTBTO's International Monitoring System (IMS) will consist of 337 facilities spanning the globe to monitor the planet for signs of nuclear explosions. Nearly 90 percent of the facilities are already up and running.

An important theme of the conference was performance optimisation which, according to W. Randy Bell, Director of CTBTO's International Data Centre (IDC), "will have growing relevance as we sustain and recapitalise the IMS and IDC in the year ahead."

In the past 20 years, the international community has invested more than one billion dollars in the global monitoring system whose data can be used by CTBTO member states – and not only for test ban verification

purposes. All stations are connected through satellite links to the IDC in Vienna.

“Our stations do not necessarily have to be in the same country as the event, but in fact can detect events from far outside from where they are located. For example, the last DPRK (North Korean) nuclear test was picked up as far as Peru,” CTBTO’s Public Information Officer Thomas Mützelburg told IPS.

“Our 183 member states have access to both the raw data and the analysis results. Through their national data centres, they study both and arrive at their own conclusion as to the possible nature of events detected,” he said. Scientists from Papua New Guinea and Argentina said they found the data “extremely useful”.

Stressing the importance of data sharing, CTBTO Executive Secretary, Lassina Zerbo, said in an interview with Nature: “If you make your data available, you connect with the outside scientific community and you keep abreast of developments in science and technology. Not only does it make the CTBTO more visible, it also pushes us to think outside the box. If you see that data can serve another purpose, that helps you to step back a little bit, look at the broader picture and see how you can improve your detection.”

In opening remarks to the conference, Zerbo said: “You will have heard me say again and again that I am passionate about this organisation. Today I am not only passionate but very happy to see all of you who share this passion: a passion for science in the service of peace. It gives me hope for the future of our children that the best and brightest scientists of our time congregate to perfect the detection of the bomb instead of working to perfect the bomb itself.”

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon set the tone in a message to the conference when he said: “With a strong verification regime and its cutting edge technology, there is no excuse for further delaying the CTBT’s entry into force.”

South African Minister of Science and Technology, Naledi Pandor, pointed out that her country “is a committed and consistent supporter” of CTBTO.

She added: “South Africa has been at the forefront of nuclear non-proliferation in Africa for over twenty years. We gave up our nuclear arsenal and signed the Pelindaba Treaty in 1996, which establishes Africa as a nuclear weapons-free zone, a zone that only came into force in July 2009.

Beside the presentations by scientists, discussion panels addressed topics of current special interest in the CTBT monitoring community. One alluded to the role of science in on-site inspections (OSIs), which are provided for under the Treaty after it enters into force.

This discussion benefited from the experience of the 2014 Integrated Field Exercise (IFE14) in Jordan. “IFE14 was the largest and most comprehensive such exercise so far conducted in the build-up of CTBTO’s OSI capabilities,” said IDC director Bell.

Participants also had an opportunity to listen to a discussion on the opportunities that new and emerging technologies can play in overcoming the challenges of nuclear security. Members of the Technology for Global Security (Tech4GS) group joined former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry in a panel discussion on ‘Citizen Networks: the Promise of Technological Innovation’.

“We are verging on another nuclear arms race,” said Perry. “I do not think that it is irreversible. This is the time to stop and reflect, debate the issue and see if there’s some third choice, some alternative, between doing nothing and having a new arms race.”

A feature of the conference was the CTBT Academic Forum focused on ‘Strengthening the CTBT through Academic Engagement’, at which Bob Frye, prestigious Emmy award-winning producer and director of documentaries and network news programme, pleaded for the need to inspire “the next generation of critical thinkers” to help usher in a world free of nuclear tests and atomic weapons of mass destruction.

The forum also provided an overview of impressive CTBT online educational resources and experiences with teaching the CTBT from the perspective of teachers and professors in Austria, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Pakistan and Russia.

With a view to bridging science and policy, the forum discussed ‘technical education for policymakers and policy education for scientists’ with the participation of eminent experts, including Rebecca Johnson, executive director of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy; Nikolai Sokov of the James Martin Center for Non-proliferation Studies; Ference Dalnoki-Veress of the Middlebury Institute for International Studies; Edward Ifft of the Center for Security Studies, Georgetown; and Matt Yedlin of the Faculty of Science at the University of British Columbia.

There was general agreement on the need to integrate technical issues of CTBT into training for diplomats and other policymakers, and increasing awareness of CTBT and broader nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy issues within the scientific community.

Yet another panel – comprising Jean du Preez, chief of CTBTO’s external relations, protocol and international cooperation, Piece Corden of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Thomas Blake of the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, and Jenifer Mackby of the Federation of American Scientists – looked ahead with a view to forging new and better links with and beyond academia, effectively engaging with the civil society, the youth and the media.

“Progress comes in increments,” said one panellist, “but not by itself.”

(IPS | 30 June 2015)

(With inputs from Valentina Gasbarri)

Photo: CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo introducing the panel discussion on 'Citizen Networks: The Promise of Technological Innovation' at SnT2015 in Vienna, June 2015.

Credit: CTBTO

CTBTO, the Nuclear Watchdog That Never Sleeps

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The world's nuclear powers may succeed in thwarting sanctions by the Security Council or avoiding condemnation by the General Assembly, but they cannot escape the scrutiny of a key international watchdog body: the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

Literally, its monitoring network keeps its ear to the ground tracking down surreptitious nuclear tests – while also detecting earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in near real-time or tracking large storms and drifting icebergs.”

And the network never sleeps because it has been working around the clock ever since it was installed 18 years ago – primarily to detect nuclear explosions above ground and underneath.

The network is a way to guard against test ban treaty violations because the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) prohibits nuclear explosions worldwide: in the atmosphere, underwater and underground.

“The CTBTO’s International Monitoring System has found a wider mission than its creators ever foresaw: monitoring an active and evolving Earth,” Dr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of CTBTO, told IPS.

He said some compare the system to a combined giant Earth stethoscope and sniffer that looks, listens, feels and sniffs for planetary irregularities.

It’s the only global network which detects atmospheric radioactivity and sound waves which humans cannot hear, said Dr. Zerbo.

The CTBTO’s global monitoring network now comprises 300 stations, some in the most remote and inaccessible areas of the Earth and sea.

The network captures four types of data: seismic (shockwaves in the earth), hydroacoustic (measuring sound through water), infrasound (low frequency sound) and radionuclide (radioactivity). It is about 90 percent complete.

When completed, the system will have 337 stations placed globally to monitor every corner of the planet effectively.

“Even before entering into force, the CTBT is saving lives,” says U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Currently, the network collects some 15 gigabytes of data daily, which it sends in real-time to the CTBTO’s data analysis centre in Vienna, Austria.

From there, a daily analysis report is sent to the CTBTO’s 183 Member States for their own use and analysis.

This universal system of looking, listening and sniffing the Earth is the work of CTBTO, which every two years hosts a scientific and technical conference.

This year’s Science and Technology Conference is scheduled to take place June 22-26 at the Hofburg Palace in the Austrian capital of Vienna.

The CTBTO’s monitoring network has had a superlative track record: on Feb. 12, 2013, 94 of the network’s seismic monitoring stations and two of its infrasound stations detected and alerted Member States to a nuclear detonation more than an hour before North Korea announced it had conducted a test.

Three days later, on Feb. 15, 2013, the CTBTO’s infrasound monitoring stations detected signals made by a meteor that had entered the atmosphere and disintegrated in the skies over Chelyabinsk, Russia.

The CTBTO network – described as the only global one of its kind to detect infrasound – recorded the shock wave caused by the exploding fireball.

That data helped scientists to locate the meteor, measure the energy release, its altitude and size.

And the system’s atmospheric sampling tracked the invisible plume of radioactivity from the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster, as it spread around the globe.

It showed that radioactivity outside of Japan was below harmful levels. That knowledge helped public safety officials around the world understand what course of action to take, according to CTBTO.

The monitoring network has also helped tsunami warning centres announce rapid warnings, in real time, after severe earthquakes; improved meteorological models for more accurate weather forecasting; and provided insights into volcanic eruptions.

Additionally, it has enhanced the alerts that civil aviation authorities use, in real time, to warn pilots about damaging volcanic dust; provide more precise information about climate change; increased understanding of the structure of the Earth’s inner core; and followed the migratory habits and the effects of climate change on marine life.

To access the data, the CTBTO has created a Virtual Data Exploitation Centre which provides scientists and researchers from many different disciplines with data for research and enables them to publish new findings.

Rave reviews have come from several academics. “The International Monitoring System is a fantastic tool for monitoring the planet’s core, atmosphere, oceans, or environment,” says Dr. Raymond Jeanloz, professor of Geophysics and Astronomy at the University of California, Berkeley.

“The CTBTO data give us a glimpse of the Earth’s deep interior -what’s happening there and how it evolved over Earth’s history,” says Professor Miaki Ishii, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Harvard University.

And Randy Bell, director of the CTBTO’s International Data Centre, says: “The global data are extremely valuable because they span decades, are high quality and highly calibrated. The data can be used to analyse local, regional or global events.”

Bell says that his primary job is to look for nuclear tests, but allowing the data to be used for science gets more experts looking at the data.

“What may be noise to me might be a signal to someone else,” he says.

Meanwhile, on a single day, the CTBTO’s International Data Centre analyses over 30,000 seismic signals to identify events that meet stringent criteria.

The CTBTO says that though many countries have their own seismic monitoring systems, the CTBTO monitors are “global, permanent, calibrated and the data are shared equally.”

Its seismic network has been monitoring infrasound extending all the way to sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, Indonesia and Antarctica.

The CTBTO also has a network of underground listening posts located in some of the world’s most remote waters listening to earthquakes in the Andes

Mountains and around the northern Pacific.

The data has been used to track the migratory habits of a particular species of Blue Whale in the Indian Ocean.

“The nations of the world have invested about one billion dollars to create The Global Ear,” says Dr. Zerbo.

“Every year they continue their investment, hoping it will never have to be used for its intended purpose of detecting a violation of the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Civil and scientific spinoffs show the world immediate

payback and in turn increase support for the Treaty.

“As more scientists and organisations make use of the data, the value has become ever more apparent,” says Dr. Zerbo.

(IPS | 17 June 2015)

Additional input by Valentina Gasbarri in Vienna.

Photo: CTBTO Head Lassina Zerbo overseeing the equipment in use during the Integrated Field Exercise IFE14 in Jordan from Nov. 3 to Dec. 9, 2014. Photo Courtesy of CTBTO



World's Nuke Arsenal Declines Haltingly While Modernisation Rises Rapidly

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The world's stockpile of nuclear weapons, held by nine states, just got a little smaller. But modernisation continues to rise rapidly, warns the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in its annual 2015 Yearbook released June 15.

The study said the total number of nuclear warheads in the world is declining, primarily due to the United States and Russia continuing to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

"But this is at a slower pace compared with a decade ago," the Yearbook said.

At the same time, both countries have "extensive and expensive" long-term modernisation programmes under way for their remaining nuclear delivery systems, warheads and production.

Currently, there are nine states—the United States, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea – armed with approximately 15,850 nuclear weapons, of which 4,300 were deployed with operational forces.

Roughly 1,800 of these weapons are being kept in a state of high operational alert.

"Despite renewed international interest in prioritizing nuclear disarmament, the modernisation programmes under way in the nuclear weapon-possessing states suggests that none of them will give up their nuclear arsenals in the foreseeable future," says SIPRI Senior Researcher Shannon Kile.

Asked for her response, Alice Slater, New York director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and who serves on the Coordinating Committee of Abolition 2000, told IPS the disheartening news from SIPRI's report is that all nine nuclear weapons states are modernising their nuclear arsenals – and particularly the five major nuclear weapons states: the United States, Russia, UK, France and China.

All five countries, she pointed out, actually pledged, in the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which was



extended indefinitely in 1995, “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”.

Nevertheless, this disregard of promises given and repeated at successive five-year NPT review conferences – with the U.S., for example, projecting expenditures of one trillion dollars over the next 30 years for two new bomb factories, missiles, planes and submarines to deliver newly designed nuclear weapons – has given fresh impetus to an international campaign by non-nuclear weapons states to negotiate a treaty to ban the bomb, declaring nuclear weapons illegal and prohibited – just as the world has done for chemical and biological weapons, said Slater.

Besides the United States and Russia, SIPRI said the nuclear arsenals of the other nuclear-armed states are considerably smaller, but all are either developing or deploying new nuclear weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so.

In the case of China, this may involve a modest increase in the size of its nuclear arsenal, said SIPRI.

India and Pakistan are both expanding their nuclear weapon production capabilities and developing new missile delivery systems.

North Korea appears to be advancing its military nuclear programme, but its technical progress is difficult to assess based on open sources, according to the Yearbook.

The latest SIPRI report follows the failure of an NPT review conference in New York last month.

Tariq Rauf, SIPRI’s director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme, expressed disappointment over the failure of the review conference in which 161 states participated “with little to show for their effort.”

He said agreement on a final document was blocked by the United States, with the support of Britain and Canada – “their reason being that they were adamantly opposed to putting pressure on Israel to attend an

international conference in March 2016 to ban nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and ballistic missiles in the region of the Middle East”.

Israel is the only country in the Middle East that has never joined the NPT and is reported to have nuclear weapons, he pointed out.

Other important issues discussed at the conference included the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons (HINW), an initiative supported by 159 non-nuclear-weapon States drawing on the results of international conferences held in Oslo (2013), Nayarit (2014) and Vienna (2014) – where it was made clear that no State, no international relief organisation nor any other entity has the capacity to deal with the humanitarian, environmental, food and socio-economic consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation.

These States called for a legally-binding prohibition on nuclear weapons, such as the prohibitions on biological and chemical weapons.

The five declared nuclear-weapon States – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, also the veto-wielding members of the Security Council – rejected all such demands and firmly insisted that their nuclear weapons were not at any risk of accidental or deliberate detonation.

“Thus, an opportunity has been lost to push for a safer Middle East without weapons of mass destruction, and for steps leading to the global elimination of nuclear weapons – at least until the next five-yearly NPT Review Conference in held in 2020,” Rauf added.

No one should take any comfort in this, neither the 192 parties to the NPT nor the non-parties, India, Israel and Pakistan, because the dangers of nuclear weapons affect everyone on this planet, said Rauf, a former senior official at the International Atomic Energy Agency (2002-2012) dealing with nuclear verification, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Slater told IPS there has been a successful series of conferences with civil society and governments over the past two years – in Norway, Mexico and Austria – to

address the catastrophic humanitarian consequence of nuclear war.

At the recent NPT, which broke up in failure without a consensus document, 107 nations signed on to a humanitarian pledge, offered by Austria, to “fill the legal gap” for nuclear disarmament.

Unwilling to be held hostage to the “security” concerns of the nuclear weapons states, the non-nuclear weapons states have pledged to press forward to outlaw nuclear weapons without them.

She said South Africa was particularly eloquent, comparing the current regime of nuclear haves and have-nots to a form of “nuclear apartheid”.

After the 70th anniversary of the tragic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is expected that negotiations will begin, she said.

While some argue that this would be ineffective without the participation of the nuclear weapons states, great pressure will be brought to bear on the “weasel” states, who mouth their fealty to nuclear disarmament, while sheltering in military alliances under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, said Slater.

Last week, the Dutch parliament, a NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) state, dependent on U.S. nuclear protection, voted to support the Humanitarian Pledge to fill the legal gap.

“One should expect more weakening of the nuclear phalanx, striding the world and holding us all hostage, as NATO states and Asian allies relying on U.S. nuclear deterrence feel the approbation of a vibrant grassroots campaign, around the world, working for a ban treaty,” said Slater.

(IPS | 15 June 2015)

There is no reference to the photo credit on neither the project website nor IPS website

Nuclear Weapons Free World No Lost Cause

By Jamshed Baruah

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) – The forthcoming 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August is an appropriate occasion to start developing a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons. This, according to experts, is the distinct message emerging from the four-week long United Nations conference, which ended without an outcome document on May 22.

The failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to reach consensus on a substantive outcome has prompted the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to express his “disappointment”, which is widely shared.

But the conference had two positive outcomes: the Humanitarian Pledge, initiated by Austria, representing a commitment of more than 100 states to work for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons; and recognition of the crucial role of the Vienna-based Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in facilitating steps towards a nuclear weapons free world.

The conference failed not only – as the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada claimed – because of the lack of agreement over the Middle East. Also the draft outcome document was generally considered deeply flawed on disarmament.

In a statement, the Secretary-General’s spokesperson said on May 23 that Ban regretted “in particular that States parties were unable to narrow their differences on the future of nuclear disarmament or to arrive at a new collective vision on how to achieve a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction”.

At the same time, Ban appealed to all States to sustain the momentum they had built over the previous five years. These included new initiatives in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and continuing efforts to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation.

“With respect to the Middle East, the Secretary-General continues to stand ready to support efforts to promote and sustain the inclusive regional dialogue necessary to achieve this goal,” Ban’s spokesperson said.

In how far this offer would be helpful, remains to be seen. Rose Gottemoeller, the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, has described as “unrealistic and unworkable” the demand from Egypt to set a deadline for the convening of a conference on a zone in the Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction – a conference the last NPT review in 2010 had stipulated must take place by 2012.

Ban hopes that the growing awareness of the devastating humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons would continue to compel urgent actions for effective measures leading to the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Secretary-General’s remarks address the basic issues at the heart of disagreement in the NPT review conference from April 27 to May 22 in New York – and this in spite of the fact that the NPT, which entered into force in 1970 and to which meanwhile 191 states have subscribed, is regarded the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime.

The treaty covers three mutually reinforcing pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – and is the basis for international cooperation on stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. However, the official nuclear weapon states – Britain, France, Russia, China and USA – are faulted for not doing enough for nuclear disarmament.

Roll back

According to Elizabeth Minor’s analysis in ‘Open Democracy’, the draft document contained no meaningful commitments by the nuclear-armed states and their allies. It set out few clear activities and no deadlines.

“Indeed, in many areas it rolled back on disarmament

promises made in 2010 – such as diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, excised from the draft. It also suggested that work on nuclear disarmament at the UN General Assembly be done by consensus, even though that forum has always operated through democratic voting procedures,” argues Minor.

“Overall, the draft strongly reflected the priorities of the NPT’s five officially nuclear-armed states (United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, USA) and their nuclear allies, in favour of upholding a status quo which features little activity on disarmament on the one hand and the modernisation of nuclear arsenals on the other,” adds Minor.

The Federation of American Scientists says: “More than two decades after the Cold War ended, the world’s combined inventory of nuclear warheads remains at a very high level: approximately 15,700. Of these, around 4,100 warheads are considered operational, of which about 1,800 U.S. and Russian warheads are on high alert, ready for use on short notice.”

Most warheads are many times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. A single nuclear warhead, if detonated on a large city, could kill millions of people, with the effects persisting for decades, experts say.

“Despite significant reductions in U.S., Russian, French and British nuclear forces compared with Cold War levels, all the nuclear weapon states continue to modernize their remaining nuclear forces and appear committed to retaining nuclear weapons for the indefinite future,” says FAS.

According to Stephen Young, a senior analyst at Union of Concerned Scientists, Obama administration plans to rebuild the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal, including the warheads, and the missiles, planes and submarines that carry them. These plans will cost \$348 billion over the next 10 years, according to a Congressional Budget Office estimate beginning of 2015. The National Defense Panel, appointed by Congress, found that the

price tag over 30 years could be as much as a \$1 trillion.

While the U.S. blamed Egypt, others from the Middle East expressed anger that the interests of Israel, a nuclear-armed state outside the NPT, had been prioritized over the interests of NPT member states. “Their criticisms seemed to be borne out when Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu reportedly thanked the U.S., UK and Canadian governments for ‘blocking an Egyptian-led drive on a possible Middle East nuclear arms ban’, writes Rebecca Johnson.

Anti-democratic and non-transparent

According to Reaching Critical Will (RCW), “The process to develop the draft Review Conference outcome document was anti-democratic and non-transparent. Several delegations, including ASEAN, expressed their sense of frustration with and exclusion from the process . . . South Africa lambasted the NPT for denigrating into rule of the minority, where the few have control even when it doesn't make sense.”

RCW points out that, as a large, cross-regional group of 47 states argued in a statement delivered by Austria, the discussions during the Conference and resulting text demonstrated the “urgency to act upon the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons,” but then fell “dramatically short of making credible progress on filling the legal gap.”

107 states – the majority of the world's countries (and of NPT states parties) – have highlighted this legal gap and have committed to fill it, by endorsing the Humanitarian Pledge issued by Austria. These states have collectively demonstrated their empowerment by demanding that their security concerns be considered equal to those of the nuclear-armed states.

RCW, headed by Ray Acheson, is of the view that these states – and those that endorse the pledge after this Conference – must now use the pledge as the basis for a new process to develop a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons. “This process should begin without delay. The 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has



already been identified as the appropriate milestone for this process to commence.”

Observers agree with Acheson that a treaty banning nuclear weapons remains the most feasible course of action for states committed to disarmament. “This Review Conference has demonstrated beyond any doubt that continuing to rely on the nuclear-armed states or their nuclear-dependent allies for leadership or action is futile.”

As the 47 states represented in the Austrian statement highlighted, “The exchanges of views that we have witnessed during this review cycle demonstrate that there is a wide divide that presents itself in many fundamental aspects of what nuclear disarmament should mean. There is a reality gap, a credibility gap, a confidence gap and a moral gap.”

These gaps can be filled by determined action to stigmatise, prohibit, and eliminate nuclear weapons. “History honours only the brave,” declared Costa Rica. “Now is the time to work for what is to come, the world we want and deserve.”

RCW argues: “Those who reject nuclear weapons must have the courage of their convictions to move ahead without the nuclear-armed states, to take back ground from the violent few who purport to run the world, and build a new reality of human security and global justice.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – 29 May 2015]

Photo: NPT Review Conference

Credit: CTBTO

Failure of Review Conference Brings World Close to Nuclear Cataclysm, Warn Activists



Photo: United States Secretary of State John Kerry addresses the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on April 27. The United States, along with the UK, and Canada, rejected the draft agreement. Credit: UN Photo/Loey Felipe

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS, May 23 2015 (IPS) - After nearly four weeks of negotiations, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference ended in a predictable outcome: a text overwhelmingly reflecting the views and interests of the nuclear-armed states and some of their nuclear-dependent allies.

“The process to develop the draft Review Conference outcome document was anti-democratic and nontransparent,” Ray Acheson, director, Reaching Critical Will,

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), told IPS.

She said it contained no meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament and even rolled back some previous commitments.

But, according to several diplomats, there was one country that emerged victorious: Israel, the only nuclear-armed Middle Eastern nation, which has never fully supported a long outstanding proposal for an international conference for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

As the Review Conference dragged towards midnight Friday, there were three countries – the United States, UK, and Canada (whose current government has been described as “more pro-Israel than Israel itself”) – that said they cannot accept the draft agreement, contained in the Final Document, on convening of the proposed conference by March 1, 2016.

As Acheson put it: “It is perhaps ironic, then, that three of these states prevented the adoption of this outcome document on behalf of Israel, a country with nuclear weapons, that is not even party to the NPT.”

The Review Conference president’s claim that the NPT belongs to all its states parties has never rung more hollow, she added.

Joseph Gerson, disarmament coordinator at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) told IPS the United States was primarily responsible, as in the 2005 review conference, for the failure of this year’s critically important NPT Review Conference.

“The United States and Israel, that is, even if Israel is one of the very few nations that has yet to sign onto the NPT,” he pointed out.

Rather than blame Israel, he said, the U.S., Britain and Canada are blaming the victim, charging that Egypt wrecked the conference with its demands that the Review Conference’s final declaration reiterate the call for creation of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone.

But, the tail was once again wagging the dog, said Gerson, who is also the AFSC’s director of Peace and Economic Security Programme.

He said that Reuters news agency reported on Thursday, the day prior to the conclusion of the NPT Review Conference, that the United States sent “a senior U.S. official” to Israel “to discuss the possibility of a compromise” on the draft text of the Review Conference’s final document.

“Israeli apparently refused, and (U.S. President) Barack Obama’s ostensible commitments to a nuclear weapons-free world melted in the face of Israeli

intransigence,” said Gerson.

John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, told IPS the problem with NPT Review Conference commitments on disarmament made over the last 20 years is not so much that they have not been strong enough. Rather the problem is that they have not been implemented by the NPT nuclear weapon states.

Coming into the 2015 Review Conference, he said, many non-nuclear weapon states were focused on mechanisms and processes to ensure implementation.

In this vein, the draft, but not adopted Final Document, recommended that the General Assembly establish an open-ended working group to “identify and elaborate” effective disarmament measures, including legal agreements for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear weapons free world.

Regardless of the lack of an NPT outcome, this initiative can and should be pushed at the next General Assembly session on disarmament and international security, this coming fall, said Burroughs, who is also executive director of the U.N. Office of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA).

Acheson told IPS that 107 states— the majority of the world’s countries (and of NPT states parties)—have endorsed a Humanitarian Pledge, committing to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

The outcome from the 2015 NPT Review Conference is the Humanitarian Pledge, she added.

The states endorsing the Pledge now and after this Conference must use it as the basis for a new process to develop a legally-binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons.

“This process should begin without delay, even without the participation of the nuclear-armed states. The 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has already been identified as

the appropriate milestone for this process to commence.”

Acheson also said a treaty banning nuclear weapons remains the most feasible course of action for states committed to disarmament.

“This Review Conference has demonstrated beyond any doubt that continuing to rely on the nuclear-armed states or their nuclear-dependent allies for leadership or action is futile,” she said.

This context requires determined action to stigmatise, prohibit, and eliminate nuclear weapons.

“Those who reject nuclear weapons must have the courage of their convictions to move ahead without the nuclear-armed states, to take back ground from the violent few who purport to run the world, and build a new reality of human security and global justice,” Acheson declared.

Gerson told IPS the greater tragedy is that the failure of the Review Conference further undermines the credibility of the NPT, increasing the dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation and doing nothing to stanch new nuclear arms races as the nuclear powers “modernize” their nuclear arsenals and delivery systems for the 21st century continues apace.

He said the failure of the Review Conference increases the dangers of nuclear catastrophe and the likelihood of nuclear winter.

The U.S. veto illustrates the central importance of breaking the silos of single issue popular movements if the people’s power needed to move governments – especially the United States – is to be built.

Had there been more unity between the U.S. nuclear disarmament movement and forces pressing for a just Israeli-Palestinian peace in recent decades, the outcome of the Review Conference could have been different, noted Gerson.

“If we are to prevail, nuclear disarmament movements must make common cause with movements for peace, justice and environmental sustainability.”

Despite commitments made in 1995, when the NPT was indefinitely extended and in subsequent Review Conferences, and reiterated in the 2000 and 2010 Review Conference final documents to work for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East, Obama was unwilling to say “No” to Israel and “Yes” to an important step to reducing the dangers of nuclear war, said Gerson.

“As we have been reminded by the Conferences on the Human Consequences of Nuclear War held in Norway, Mexico and Austria, between the nuclear threats made by all of the nuclear powers and their histories of nuclear weapons accidents and miscalculations, that we are alive today is more a function of luck than of policy decisions.”

The failure of Review Conference is thus much more than a lost opportunity, it brings us closer to nuclear cataclysms, he declared.

Burroughs told IPS debate in the Review Conference revealed deep divisions over whether the nuclear weapon states have met their commitments to de-alert, reduce, and eliminate their arsenals and whether modernisation of nuclear arsenals is compatible with achieving disarmament.

The nuclear weapon states stonewalled on these matters.

If the nuclear weapons states displayed a business as usual attitude, the approach of non-nuclear weapon states was characterised by a sense of urgency, illustrated by the fact that by the end of the Conference over 100 states had signed the “Humanitarian Pledge” put forward by Austria.

It commits signatories to efforts to “stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons in light of their unacceptable humanitarian consequences”.
(IPS | 23 May 2015)

Opinion: Universalisation and Strengthening Nuke Treaty Review Need to be Qualitative

By Ambassador A. L. A. Azeez

NEW YORK (IPS) - "Strengthening the Review Process" and "Universalisation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty" (NPT) are distinctly substantive issues, that require consideration with their specificities in view.

Nevertheless, there are a few aspects pertaining to the themes, which undoubtedly make them inter-related. They should not be lost sight of, as the NPT Review Conference, which concludes its month long session Friday, moves along its agenda.

The five-yearly review process has been effectively reduced to one of stock-taking - of unmet timelines, benchmarks and undertakings.

The issue of strengthening the review process arose pursuant to, and as part of, the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. It remains on the agenda of each Main Committee of the NPT Review Conference since then.

While a special feature of the 1995 process is its important adjunct, the indefinite extension of the Treaty, a specific expectation of the outcome of that process was strengthening of the three pillars of the Treaty.

This was sought to be achieved in such a way that the implementation of the three pillars would be consummate and mutually reinforcing.

One should not be oblivious, however, to what provided the immediate context for indefinite extension. It was the expectation that those countries, which retained their nuclear weapons under the Treaty, would take practical measures towards the elimination of nuclear arsenals.

It was noted then, with concern, that expected measures towards the elimination of nuclear arsenals had floundered within the 25 years preceding the 1995 review and extension process.

Underpinning this standpoint was the commitment by nuclear weapon states that they would pursue disarmament as a matter of priority and without delay.

This is reflected in the outcomes of the review conferences, particularly that of the 2010 Review Conference, where a clear commitment was made, that disarmament would be taken forward in 'good faith' and 'at an early date'.

Nevertheless, those who possess nuclear arsenals have not lived up to the commitments. The 'forward looking' thrust of the process, which was originally intended to inspire positive action, has sadly, due to overwhelming convergence of strategic interests, or other reasons, become an exercise of reinventing the wheel.

What is now required is to clearly state timelines and verification and other measures in any plan of action to be adopted.

There has been no progress in nuclear disarmament. Nuclear non-proliferation has made only a little headway in a few regions. The impact on 'peaceful uses', of restrictive and control measures, is all too apparent. They often appear to border on denial of technology.

The total lack of progress in the field of nuclear disarmament as against corresponding increase in restrictive or control measures in the area of 'peaceful uses', with nuclear non-proliferation swinging in-between, presents a spectre of regression for all humanity.

It seems to be reinforcing the view among countries, which look to 'peaceful uses' as a component in their national energy policies, or development strategies, that leaving aside the treaty construct of 'three pillars', playing field is not level, and will not be, in the foreseeable future.

In diplomacy, the emphasis always is on staying positive. As the review process is in its last week, the call for it is growing stronger.

But can one conceivably do so in the current scenario, which appears fraught with far too many challenges in area of nuclear disarmament with its inter-relationship

to the other two pillars of NPT? Is cautious optimism in order?

A measure of pessimism has already set in, and has the potential to become irreversibly dominant. It would be so, unless and until there is an urgent re-summoning of necessary political will to achieve a radical change in our mindsets as well as in our policies and programmes.

Universalisation of the Treaty is an objective that needs to be continuously promoted. But behind what has led to this call remains its indefinite extension that was achieved in 1995.

If there had been no agreement on extension in 1995, there would be no treaty left behind today. The goal of strengthening the review process must therefore inspire, and be inspired by, the goal of universalisation.

The logic that led to the extension of the Treaty needs to bear on the call for its universalisation, both as part of, and pursuant to, review process.

The extension of the Treaty is indefinite, and it was intended to be outcome-oriented. When the three pillars of the Treaty are advanced equally, and progress towards nuclear disarmament becomes irreversible, the Treaty would be said to have achieved its objective.

A strengthened review process would thus contribute a great deal towards realising this intended outcome.

The goal of universalisation, however, needs to be advanced with a time span in view, and above all, it needs to be qualitative.

What does all this mean?

We should no doubt count on and increase the number of adherences, but equally, we should also emphasise the overall importance of integrating, without discrimination inter se, all the provisions of the Treaty. National policies and programmes of State parties need to reflect these thereby enabling the advancement of its three pillars.

The review process should strengthen efforts to achieve this twin goal.

(IPS | 19 May 2015)

Q&A: Nuclear Disarmament a Non-Starter, “But I Would Love to Be Proven Wrong”

By Thalif Deen

Interview with Dr Jennifer Allen Simons, Founder and President of the Simons Foundation, dedicated to the elimination of nuclear weapons

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - Albert Einstein, the internationally-renowned physicist who developed the theory of relativity, once famously remarked: “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”

Perhaps Einstein visualised a nuclear annihilation in the next world war, with disastrous consequences in its aftermath: humanity going back to the Stone Age.

According to most peace activists, the move to eliminate nuclear weapons is not gaining traction, with no hopeful signs of an ideal world without deadly weapons of mass destruction.

Over the last few decades, the five major nuclear powers – the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China – have been joined by four more: India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea.

And if Iran goes nuclear – even later than sooner – Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are likely to follow in its footsteps.

The most frightening worst-case scenario is the new Cold War between the United States and Russia, triggered primarily by the political crisis in Ukraine and Russian annexation of Crimea.

A proposal on the sidelines of a month-long review conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which concludes next week, is to begin negotiations on a proposed international convention to eliminate all nuclear weapons worldwide.

Asked if the proposal will be a reality, Dr. Jennifer Allen Simons, founder and president of the Simons Foundation, a relentless advocate of nuclear disarmament, bluntly told IPS: “I think it is a non-starter,” but added: “I would love to be proven wrong.”

She pointed out that nuclear weapons states (NWS) are offering the same old rhetoric while upgrading their arsenals and planning for a long future with nuclear weapons.

“The most that may happen is consensus on lowering the operational status of nuclear weapons,” said Dr Simons, who was an adviser to the Canadian government delegation to the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the 2002 NPT Prepcom.

The global zero commission report on de-alerting has been well received, said Dr Simons, who was at the United Nations last week for the NPT Review Conference, and whose foundation, established to eliminate nuclear weapons, is commemorating its 30th anniversary this year.

Excerpts from the interview follow.

Q: Judging by the current NPT negotiations, do you think the Review Conference will succeed in adopting an outcome document, by consensus, by May 22?

A: Though it is too early to tell, so far it seems likely they will get a consensus document, and if so, it will not contain the convention/ban, humanitarian impact issues. I heard that several delegations are prepared to push for disarmament convention/ban or framework of agreements through the open-ended working group if NPT consensus on this issue fails.

Q: Will the new Cold War between the U.S. and Russia have an impact on the outcome of the Review Conference?

A: It may not have an impact because the NWS are not going to eliminate their arsenals. The new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) is on track with reductions, but I do not believe we will see another bilateral commitment for further reductions.

Q: What, in your view, are the major obstacles for total nuclear disarmament?

A: The major obstacle may be fear! Lack of trust between Russia and the West, lack of trust that the

over 30 nuclear-capable states may move forward to nuclear weapon capability. My greatest fear is that the catalyst to elimination will be the detonation of a nuclear weapon, by accident, miscalculation, design or a successful cyberattack will trigger the highly automated system or a spoofed attack.

While the U.S. feels its system is impenetrable, however a recent report from the U.S. Defence Science Board warned that the vulnerability of the U.S. command and control system had never been fully assessed. It is not known whether Russia’s and China’s systems are vulnerable. It also cannot be assumed that India’s and Pakistan’s systems are invulnerable.

Russian President Vladimir Putin’s flaunting of Russia’s nuclear option is worrying and an obstacle to changing the political salience of nuclear weapons and also provides the other NWS states with a rationale for retaining and upgrading their weapons.

Q: Will we ever see nuclear disarmament in our lifetime or perhaps within the next 50 years?

A: It could happen within my lifetime — and probably only if there was a detonation. This would be such a tragic event and a crime against humanity that it would prompt a ban.

The irony of all this is that everyone is afraid to use them, the military don’t like them not only because of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, but worse, they cost so much to maintain and the military would rather have the money for other weapons.

Frankly, I will never understand why people want to kill.

(IPS | 11 May 2015)

Faith-Based Organisations Warn of Impending Nuclear Disaster

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - As the month-long review conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) continued into its second week, a coalition of some 50 faith-based organisations (FBOs), anti-nuclear peace activists and civil society organisations (CSOs) was assigned an unenviable task: a brief three-minute presentation warning the world of the disastrous humanitarian consequences of a nuclear attack.

Accomplishing this feat within a rigid time frame, Dr. Emily Welty of the World Council of Churches (WCC) did not mince her words.

Speaking on behalf of the coalition, she told delegates: “We raise our voices in the name of sanity and the shared values of humanity. We reject the immorality of holding whole populations hostage, threatened with a cruel and miserable death.”

And she urged the world’s political leaders to muster the courage needed to break the deepening spirals of mistrust that undermine the viability of human societies and threaten humanity’s shared future.

She said nuclear weapons are incompatible with the values upheld by respective religious traditions – the right of people to live in security and dignity; the commands of conscience and justice; the duty to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard the planet for future generations.

“Nuclear weapons manifest a total disregard for all these values and commitments,” she declared, warning there is no countervailing imperative – whether of national security, stability in international power relations, or the difficulty of overcoming political inertia – that justifies their continued existence, much less their use.

Led by Peter Prove, director, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, World Council of Churches, Susi Snyder, Nuclear Disarmament Programme Manager PAX and Hirotsugu Terasaki, executive director of Peace Affairs, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), the coalition also included Global Security Institute, Islamic Society of North America, United

Church of Christ, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Pax Christi USA and United Religions Initiative.

SGI, one of the relentless advocates of nuclear disarmament, was involved in three international conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (in Oslo, Norway in March 2013; Nayarit, Mexico in February 2014; and Vienna, Austria, December 2014), and also participated in two inter-faith dialogues on nuclear disarmament (in Washington DC, and Vienna over the last two years).

At both meetings, inter-faith leaders jointly called for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

The current NPT review conference, which began Apr. 27, is scheduled to conclude May 22, perhaps with an “outcome document” – if it is adopted by consensus.

The review conference also marks the 70th anniversary of the U.S. nuclear attack on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II.

Since August 1945, when both cities were subjected to atomic attacks, Dr Welty told delegates, the continued existence of nuclear weapons has forced humankind to live in the shadow of apocalyptic destruction.

“Their use would not only destroy the past fruits of human civilization, it would disfigure the present and consign future generations to a grim fate.”

For decades, the coalition of FBOs said, the obligation and responsibility of all states to eliminate these weapons of mass destruction has been embodied in Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

But progress toward the fulfillment of this repeatedly affirmed commitment has been too slow – and today almost imperceptible.

Instead, ongoing modernisation programmes of the world’s nuclear arsenals is diverting vast resources from limited government budgets when public finances are hard-pressed to meet the needs of human security.

“This situation is unacceptable and cannot be permitted to continue,” the coalition said.

The London Economist pointed out recently 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.

The world’s five major nuclear powers are the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia – and the non-declared nuclear powers include India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

The coalition pledged to: communicate within respective faith communities the inhumane and immoral nature of nuclear weapons and the unacceptable risks they pose, working within and among respective faith traditions to raise awareness of the moral imperative to abolish nuclear weapons; and continue to support international efforts to ban nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds and call for the early commencement of negotiations by states on a new legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons in a forum open to all states and blockable by none.

The coalition also called on the world’s governments to: heed the voices of the world’s hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) urging the abolition of nuclear weapons, whose suffering must never be visited on any other individual, family or society; take to heart the realities clarified by successive international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons; take concrete action leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, consistent with existing obligations under the NPT; and associate themselves with the pledge delivered at the Vienna Conference and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. (IPS | 7 May 2015)

Photo: Dr. Emily Welty from WCC delivers the interfaith joint statement at the NPT Review Conference.

Credit: Kimiaki Kawai | SGI





Q&A: Comprehensive Ban on Nuclear Testing, a ‘Stepping Stone’ to a Nuke-Free World

Kanya D’Almeida interviews
Lassina Zerbo

Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO)

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - With the four-week-long review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) underway at the United Nations, hopes

and frustrations are running equally high, as a binding political agreement on the biggest threat to humanity hangs in the balance.

Behind the headlines that focus primarily on power struggles between the five major nuclear powers – the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China – scores of organisations refusing to be bogged down in geopolitical squabbles are going about the Herculean task of

creating a safer world.

One of these bodies is the Vienna-based Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), founded in 1996 alongside the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), with the aim of independently monitoring compliance.

With 183 signatories and 164 ratifications, the treaty represents a milestone in international efforts to ban

nuclear testing.

In order to be legally binding, however, the treaty needs the support of the 44 so-called 'Annex 2 States', eight of which have so far refused to ratify the agreement: China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea and the United States.

This holdout has severely crippled efforts to move towards even the most basic goal of the nuclear abolition process.

Still, the CTBTO has made tremendous strides in the past 20 years to set the stage for full ratification.

Its massive global network of seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide detecting stations makes it nearly impossible for governments to violate the terms of the treaty, and the rich data generated from its many facilities is contributing to a range of scientific endeavors worldwide.

In an interview with IPS, CTBTO Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo spoke about the organisation's hopes for the review conference, and shared some insights on the primary hurdles standing in the way of a nuclear-free world.

Excerpts from the interview follow.

Q: What role will the CTBTO play in the conference?

A: Our hope is that the next four weeks result in a positive outcome with regards to disarmament and non-proliferation, and we think the CTBT plays an important role there. The treaty was one of the key elements that led to indefinite extension of the NPT itself, and is the one thing that seems to be bringing all the state parties together. It's a low-hanging fruit and we need to catch it, make it serve as a stepping-stone for whatever we want to achieve in this review conference.

For instance, we need to find a compromise between those who are of the view that we should move first on non-proliferation, and between those who say we should move equally, if not faster, on disarmament.

We also need to address the concerns of those who

ask why nuclear weapons states are allowed to develop more modern weapons, while other states are prevented from developing even the basic technologies that could serve as nuclear weapons.

The CTBT represents something that all states can agree to; it serves as the basis for consensus on other, more difficult issues, and this is the message I am bringing to the conference.

Q: What have been some of the biggest achievements of the CTBTO? What are some of your most pressing concerns for the future?

A: The CTBTO bans all nuclear test explosions underwater, underground and in the air. We've built a network of nearly 300 stations for detecting nuclear tests, including tracking radioactive emissions.

Our international monitoring system has stopped horizontal proliferation (more countries acquiring nuclear weapons), as well as vertical proliferation (more advanced weapons systems).

That's why some [states] are hesitant to consider ratification of the CTBT: because they are of the view that they still need testing to be able to maintain or modernise their stockpiles.

Any development of nuclear weapons happening today is based on testing that was done 20-25 years ago. No country, except for North Korea, has performed a single test in the 21st century.

Q: How do you deal with outliers like North Korea?

A: We haven't had official contact with North Korea. I can only base my analysis on what world leaders are telling me. [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey] Lavrov has attempted to engage North Korea in discussions about the CTBT and asked if they would consider a moratorium on testing. Yesterday I met Yerzhan Ashikbayev, deputy foreign minister for Kazakhstan, which has bilateral relations with North Korea, and they have urgently called on North Korea to consider signature of the CTBT.

Those are the countries that can help us, those who

have bilateral relations.

Having said this, if I'm invited to North Korea for a meeting that could serve as a basis for engaging in discussions, to help them understand more about the CTBT and the organizational framework and infrastructure that we've built: why not? I would be ready to do it.

We are also engaging states like Israel, who could take leadership in regions like the Middle East by signing onto the CTBT. I was just in Israel, where I asked the questions: Do you want to test? I don't think so. Do you need it? I don't think so. So why don't you take leadership to open that framework that we need for confidence building in the region that could lead to more ratification and more consideration of a nuclear weapons-free zone or a WMD-free zone.

Israel now says that CTBT ratification is not an "if" but a "when" – I hope the "when" is not too far away.

Q: Despite scores of marches, thousands of petitions and millions of signatures calling for disarmament and abolition, the major nuclear weapons states are holding out. This can be extremely disheartening for those at the forefront of the movement. What would be your message to global civil society?

A: I would say, keep putting pressure on your political leaders. We need leadership to move on these issues. Right now 90 percent of the world is saying "no" to nuclear testing, yet we are held hostage by the handful of countries [that have not ratified the treaty].

Only civil society can play a role in telling governments, "You've got to move because the majority of the world is saying 'no' to what you still have, and what you are still holding onto." The CTBT is a key element for that goal we want to achieve, hopefully in our lifetime: a world free of nuclear weapons.

(IPS | 29 April 2015)

Photo: Gamma spectroscopy can detect traces of radioactivity from nuclear tests from the air.

Credit: CTBTO Official Photostream/CC-BY-2.0

Nuclear Testing Legacy Haunts Pacific Island Countries

By Shailendra Singh*

SUVA, Fiji (IDN) - Prominent Pacific Island anti-nuclear campaigners want a revival of their once-robust movement to support the international effort against 'nuclearism'. Their call coincides with a major international meeting at the United Nations in New York – the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) from April 27 to May 22, 2015.

The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology while promoting co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

However, besides Palau, there were no Pacific island countries represented in the 148 States parties that participated in one or more of the annual preparatory meetings held in the lead up to the 2015 NPT.

This is despite the Pacific region's immense contribution to the nuclear disarmament movement, as recorded by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). At the height of the U.S.-Soviet arms race, members of the South Pacific Forum signed and ratified the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (SPNFZ). Moreover, Pacific governments have traditionally voted in favour of resolutions calling for a global treaty banning nuclear weapons at the UN and at various international disarmament summits.

This latest NPT review conference will consider ways to promote engagement with civil society in strengthening NPT norms and in promoting disarmament education. Yet, participation by Pacific Islands-based civil society organisations in the conference will be scant.

According to Emele Duituturaga, the head of the Pacific Islands Association of Civil Society Organisations (PIANGO), none of their national liaison units are represented at the 2015 NPT. Neither is Duituturaga aware of any other NGOs that will represent the region at the conference.

The Pacific's absence from a major event such as the NPT is another apparent sign of the overall decline of anti-nuclear advocacy in the region, which some see as a worrying trend that needs to be arrested.

Stanley Simpson, formerly the assistant director of the now non-operational Fiji-based regional pressure group, Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, told IDN that 'nuclearism' is still a threat, even if it might appear dormant.

"The danger is not over," insists Simpson. "We still live with the legacy of nuclear testing and activity." Nuclear testing in the Pacific began in 1946 and ended in 1996, with the former colonial powers – United States, Britain and France – collectively conducting more than 300 detonations in the region.

Nearly 70 years on, the continued refusal of the concerned powers to own up to their past transgressions and compensate victims deepens the sense of injustice felt in the region.

In February this year, the Fiji Government pledged financial assistance to 24 surviving Fijian soldiers who were on Christmas Island (now Kiribati) during British nuclear tests in the late 1950s. Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama said, "We owe it to these men to help them now, not wait for the British politicians and bureaucrats. We need to erase this blight on our history."

A recent article by the President of the Marshall Islands, Christopher J. Loeak, outlines the callous manner in which his country was treated by the United States. The article appeared in the 2014 publication, *Banning Nuclear Weapons: A Pacific perspective*, published by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Loeak points out that besides the "Bravo" test, which was 1,000 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb, 17 other tests in the Marshall Islands were in the megaton range. The total yield of the tests in the Marshalls comprised nearly 80 per cent of the atmospheric total detonated by the United States.

French Polynesians were similarly treated by the French Government, which conducted 193 atmospheric and underground nuclear tests at Moruroa and Fangataufa atolls. The ICAN publication relates the case of a local Maohi (Polynesian) worker at the testing centre after an atmospheric test in September 1966 on Moruroa. The worker was among those instructed to clean up all the debris that littered the roads. The worker stated that the supervisors told them: 'It's OK, you can go over there.'

According to David Robie, a journalism professor at the AUT University in Auckland, New Zealand, the Pacific anti-nuclear movement grew out of a sense of outrage that countries like Britain, France and the United States were using vulnerable Pacific island territories as pawns to carry out tests that they were not willing to carry out in their own backyard.

Robie, who covered anti-nuclear issues as an independent journalist, authored a book in 1986, *Eyes of Fire*, about the bombing of the Rainbow Warrior by French state terrorists in 1985. "The arrogance of the North really upset a lot of people in the Pacific," Robie told IDN. "Newly emerging countries like Vanuatu, led by the late Walter Lini (Prime Minister of Vanuatu) and political leaders like Oscar Temaru, then mayor of the Pape'ete suburb of Fa'aa, declared themselves "nuclear-free" to make a statement of independence."

After Pacific-wide protests forced a halt to French nuclear tests in 1996, the civil society groups at heart of the anti-nuclear movement either scaled down or closed their operations. Some turned their attention to what became regarded as immediate hazards, such as global warming.

Robie states that while France was conducting nuclear tests in the Pacific, there was still a big "power ogre" to focus attention on. Once the end of these tests were achieved, other issues took precedence. "In the 1980s, the buzzword was nuclear refugees. Now it is climate change refugees," says Robie.

The Fiji anti-Nuclear group (FANG), which was at the frontline of the anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s, is no longer active. The group opposed both French testing in Tahiti and the Fiji government's policy on allowing nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed ships into the country. The Suva-based Pacific Concerns Resource Center (PCRC), which acted as the secretariat for the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement, has since closed operations.

PIANGO's Duituturaga states that with the closure of the PCRC, the nuclear issue "went off the radar". Asked if the nuclear danger was over for the Pacific, Duituturaga replied: "No – of course not. Nuclear arms are destructive to all of us – whether or not we are directly involved."

Robie too feels that the Pacific remains exposed. Specific threats include the persistent radioactive contamination from the tests; the issue of newer fallout from the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan; and the China-U.S. rivalry, especially with speculation about China's eventual plans for Taiwan, which raises the specter of nuclear conflict.

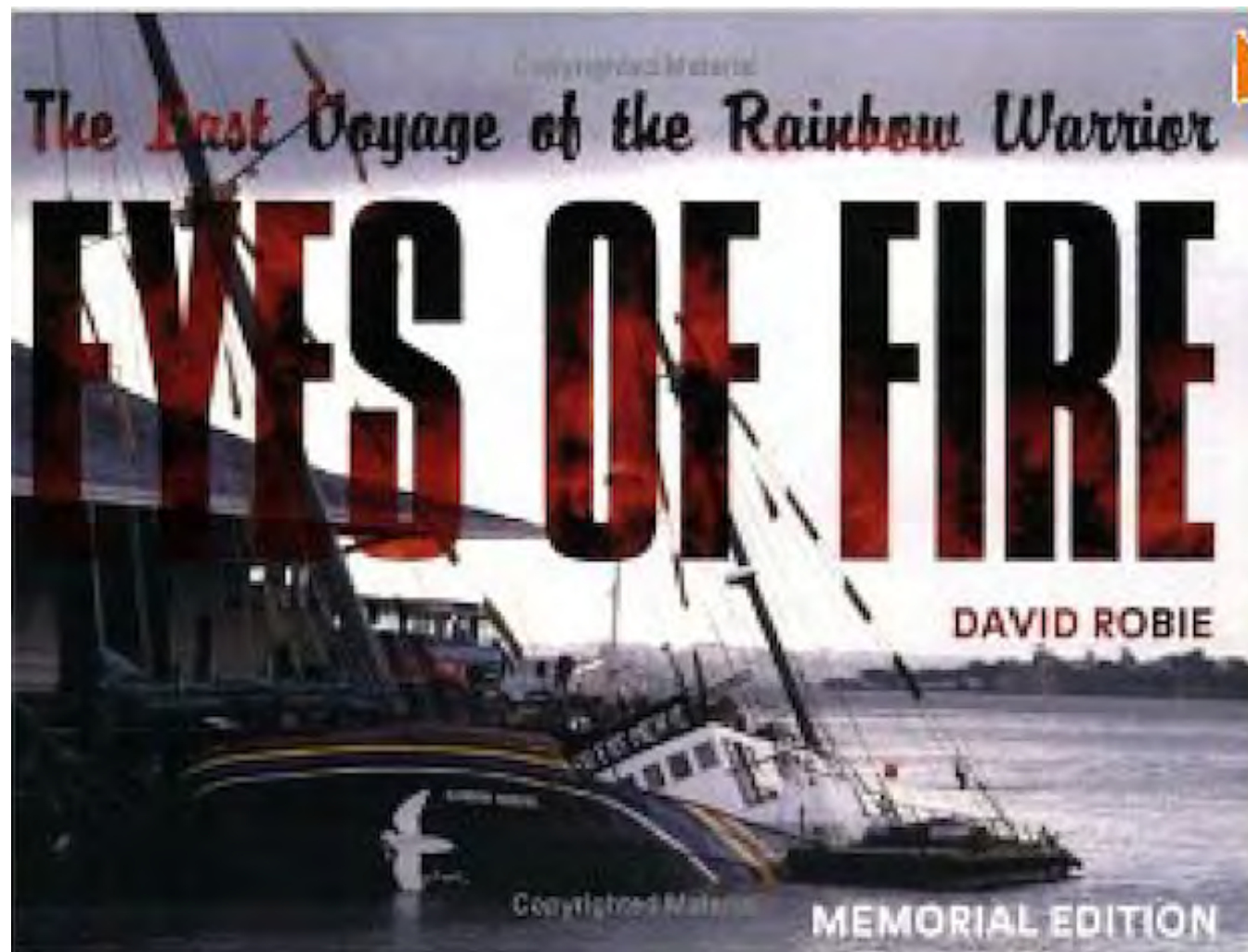
According to Simpson, it behoves the Pacific to be part of the disarmament movement. "Nuclear testing is an emotional issue for Pacific Islanders. Pacific people can strengthen the movement's heart and soul," states Simpson.

Unfortunately, the Pacific will presence is unlikely to be felt at the 2015 NPT, which will consider a number of crucial issues, such as nuclear disarmament, and the promotion and strengthening of safeguards.

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[IDN-InDepthNews – 17 April 2015]

Image credit: www.academia.edu



No Signs Yet Of Mass Destruction Weapon-Free Middle East

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN (IDN) – In run-up to the four-week-long quinquennial review of the landmark Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the goal of a Middle East free of the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery remains a distant dream. And so does the Helsinki Conference that should have been convened in December 2012.

All indications are that also the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Seven (G7) influential countries of the world – Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, and the United States – do not see a silver lining on the horizon. They met ahead of G7 summit June 7-8.

In a communiqué on April 15, they “commend the ongoing efforts of the Facilitator and co-sponsors of the 1995 Resolution (the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States), particularly the five rounds of consultations held among the regional States.”

But they “regret that, despite these efforts, it has thus far not been possible to convene the Helsinki Conference”.

The statement issued at their meeting in the northern German port city of Lübeck adds: “The regional parties must engage actively with each other in order to reach consensus on a date and an agenda for the Helsinki Conference as soon as possible. We emphasise that the Conference can only lead to a meaningful process if the interests of all participants are taken into account.”

The 1995 Resolution emerged from the NPT Review Conference, which called for “the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems”.

The NPT entered into force in 1970, and 190 states have subscribed.

The proposal of a Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone (WMDFZ) was first tabled by Egypt in 1990. It was based on longstanding calls to establish a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East. Both

measures, intended to be pursued in parallel, rallied broad international support but practical progress has since been elusive.

In fact, on November 23, the U.S. issued a statement postponing the December 2012 conference. The conference has not yet been rescheduled, and the co-conveners have been offering different opinions as to when it should be held, and the reasons for the delay.

The U.S. statement cited “present conditions in the Middle East” and the lack of agreement by participating states on “acceptable conditions” for the December conference. No timeline for rescheduling was included.

In a November 24 statement, Russia called for the conference to be held before April 2013, citing that the preparations had already reached an “advanced stage” and that the reason for postponement was that not all states in the region agreed to participate in the conference.

At the time of the announcement, conference facilitator Jaakko Laajava, a Finnish diplomat had not yet secured Israel's attendance. While Iran announced that it would attend on November 7, it also said it would not engage with the Israelis at the conference, and some experts believe Iran only announced it would attend because Tehran knew that the December 2012 meeting would not take place.

In protest of the postponement of the much awaited Helsinki conference, Egypt walked out of a NPT Preparatory Committee Meeting in Geneva on April 29, 2013, and called for it to be rescheduled as soon as possible.

As the U.S.-based Arms Control Association points out in a fact sheet, at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, state parties were able to agree for the first time to five practical steps to make progress towards implementing the 1995 NPT Review Conference Middle East resolution.

The United States, Russia and the United Kingdom, the treaty depository powers and sponsors of that Resolution, committed to work together with the UN Secre

tary General to convene a regional conference to discuss the issue in 2012.

Other measures agreed included the appointment of a WMDFZ facilitator as well as designation of a government that will host the conference. State parties will take up the question of the implementation of these steps at the subsequent NPT Review Conference in 2015. As the Lübeck communiqué implies, it is unlikely to happen.

Nevertheless, the Foreign Ministers of G7 countries, which include three permanent members of the UN Security Council – France, Great Britain and the U.S. – say they are “committed to seeking a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in a way that promotes international stability and stresses the vital importance of non-proliferation for achieving this goal”.

They add: “Preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery remains a top priority, since such proliferation poses a major threat to international peace and security. The fact that the uncontrolled proliferation of conventional arms is undermining stability in certain regions of the globe is a strong reason for the G7 to take action in this field as well.”

Regarding the upcoming ninth NPT Review Conference, which will be held 45 years after the NPT's entry into force and 70 years after the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the end of World War II, the G7 “reaffirm” their “unconditional support for all three mutually reinforcing pillars of the NPT” – disarmament, nonproliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

G7 Foreign Ministers point out: “The NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The NPT makes a vital and enduring contribution to making the world a safer place. It benefits its members on a daily basis.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – 15 April 2015]

Opinion: Shared Action for a Nuclear Weapon Free World

By Daisaku Ikeda*

TOKYO (IPS) - From the end of April, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference will be held in New York. In this year that marks the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I add my voice to those urging substantial commitments and real progress toward the realisation of a world without nuclear weapons.

In recent years, there has been an important shift in the debate surrounding nuclear weapons. This can be seen in the fact that, in October of last year, more than 80 percent of the member states of the United Nations lent their support to a joint statement on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, in this way expressing their shared desire that nuclear weapons never be used – under any circumstances.

Meanwhile, the Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Vienna, Austria, in December, marked the first time that nuclear-weapon states – the United States and the United Kingdom – participated, acknowledging the existence of a complex debate on this question.

In order to break out of the current deadlock, I believe we need to refocus on the fundamental inhumanity of nuclear weapons in the full breadth of their impacts. Taking this as our point of departure, we must formulate measures to ensure that no country or people ever suffer the kind of irreparable damage that nuclear weapons would wreak.

Here, I would like to propose two specific initiatives. One is to develop a new NPT-centred institutional framework – a commission dedicated to nuclear disarmament:

I urge the heads of government of as many states as possible to attend the NPT Review Conference this year, and that they participate in a forum where the findings of the international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons are shared.

Then, in light of the fact that all parties to the NPT

unanimously expressed their concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons at the 2010 Review Conference, I hope that each head of government or national delegation will take the opportunity of this year's conference to introduce their respective plans of action to prevent such consequences.

Finally, building upon the “unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament,” reaffirmed at the 2000 Review Conference, I propose that an “NPT disarmament commission” be established as a subsidiary organ to the NPT to ensure the prompt and concrete fulfilment of this commitment.

The second initiative I would like to propose concerns the creation of a platform for negotiations for a legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons:

Creation of such a platform should be based on a careful evaluation of the outcome of this year's NPT Review Conference, and it could draw on the 2013 General Assembly resolution calling for a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to be convened no later than 2018. This conference could be held in 2016 to begin the process of drafting a new treaty.

I strongly hope that Japan will work with other countries and with civil society to accelerate the process of eliminating nuclear weapons from our world. In August of this year, the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues will be held in Hiroshima; the World Nuclear Victims' Forum will take place in November, also in Hiroshima; and the annual Pugwash conference will be held in Nagasaki in November.

Planning is also under way for a World Youth Summit for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons to be held in Hiroshima at the end of August as a joint initiative by the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and other groups. I hope that the summit will adopt a youth declaration pledging to bring the era of nuclear weapons to an end,

and that it will help foster a greater solidarity among the world's youth in support of a treaty to prohibit these weapons.

At the Vienna Conference in December, the government of Austria issued a pledge to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in order to realise the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In the same spirit, together with the representatives of other faith-based organisations, the SGI last year organised interfaith panels in Washington D.C. and Vienna which issued Joint Statements expressing the participants' pledge to work together for a world free of nuclear weapons.

The future is determined by the depth and intensity of the pledge made by people living in the present moment. The key to bringing the history of nuclear weapons to a close lies in ensuring that all actors – states, international organisations 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.

(IPS | 9 April 2015)

*Daisaku Ikeda is a Japanese Buddhist philosopher and peace-builder, and president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) grassroots Buddhist movement (www.sgi.org)

U.N. Warns of Growing Divide Between Nuclear Haves and Have-Nots

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - As she prepared to leave office after more than three years, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane painted a dismal picture of a conflicted world: it is “not the best of times for disarmament.”

The warning comes against the backdrop of a new Cold War on the nuclear horizon and spreading military conflicts in the politically-volatile Middle East, including in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

“The prospects for further nuclear arms reductions are dim and we may even be witnessing a roll-back of the hard-won disarmament gains of the last 25 years,” she told the Disarmament Commission last week.

In one of her final speeches before the world body, the outgoing U.N. under-secretary-general said, “I have never seen a wider divide between nuclear-haves and nuclear have-nots over the scale and pace of nuclear disarmament.”

Kane’s warning is a realistic assessment of the current impasse – even as bilateral nuclear arms reductions between the United States and Russia have virtually ground to a standstill, according to anti-nuclear activists.

There are signs even of reversal of gains already made, for example, with respect to the longstanding U.S.-Russian Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty.

No multilateral negotiations on reduction and elimination of nuclear arsenals are in sight, and all arsenals are being modernised over the next decades.

And contrary to the promise made by the 2010 NPT



(Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference, a proposed international conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East never got off the ground.

John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy (LCNP), told IPS: “As the world heads into the NPT Review Conference, Apr. 27-May 22, is nuclear disarmament therefore doomed

or at least indefinitely suspended?”

Not necessarily, he said.

The tensions – with nuclear dimensions – arising out of the Ukraine crisis may yet spark some sober rethinking of current trends, said Burroughs, who is also director of the U.N. Office of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA).

After all, he pointed out, the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis

served to stimulate subsequent agreements, among them the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco establishing the Latin American nuclear weapons free zone, the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the 1972 US-Russian strategic arms limitation agreement and Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Jayantha Dhanapala, former U.N. under-secretary-general for disarmament affairs, said the “Thirteen Steps” agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference and the 64-point Action Programme, together with the agreement on the Middle East WMD Free Zone proposal and the conceptual breakthrough on recognising the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, augured well for the strengthened review process.

“And yet the report cards meticulously maintained by civil society on 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,” he added.

Unless the upcoming NPT Review Conference reverses these ominous trends, the 2015 Conference is doomed to fail, imperiling the future of the NPT, Dhanapala warned.

A stocktaking exercise is relevant, he added. In 1995, he said, “We had five nuclear weapon states and one outside the NPT. Today, we have nine nuclear weapon armed states – four of them outside the NPT.

“In 1970, when the NPT entered into force, we had a total of 38,153 nuclear warheads. Today, over four decades later, we have 16,300 – just 21,853 less – with

over 4,000 on deployed status and the promise by the two main nuclear weapon states to reduce their deployed arsenals by 30 percent to 1550 each within seven years of the new START entering into force.”

Another NPT nuclear weapon state, the UK is on the verge of renewing its Trident nuclear weapon programme, he pointed out.

Turning to the issue of conventional weapons, Kane said: “We are flooded daily with images of the brutal and internecine regional conflicts bedeviling the globe – conflicts fuelled by unregulated and illegal arms flows.”

It is estimated that more than 740,000 men, women, and children die each year as a result of armed violence.

“However, in the midst of these dark clouds, I have seen some genuine bright spots during my tenure as high representative,” Kane said.

The bitter conflict in Syria will not, in the words of the secretary-general, be brought to a close without an inclusive and Syrian-led political process, but Syria’s accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, facilitated by the Framework for the Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons agreed upon between the Russian Federation and the United States of America, has been one positive outcome from this bloody conflict, she added.

“We have seen the complete removal of all declared chemicals from Syria and the commencement of a process to destroy all of Syria’s chemical weapons production facilities.”

Emerging from the so-called ‘disarmament malaise’, the humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament,

supported by a clear majority of states – as illustrated by the 155 states that supported New Zealand’s statement in the First Committee – has continued to gather momentum, Kane told delegates.

“This is not a distraction from the so-called ‘realist’ politics of nuclear disarmament. Rather, it is an approach that seeks to underscore the devastating human impact of nuclear weapons and ground them in international humanitarian law,” she said.

“This movement is supported by almost 80 percent of U.N. member states. The numbers cannot be ignored.”

One of the international community’s major achievements in the last year has been to bring the Arms Trade Treaty into force only a year and a half after it was negotiated.

This truly historic treaty will play a critical role in ensuring that all actors involved in the arms trade must be held accountable and must be expected to comply with internationally agreed standards, Kane said.

This is possible, she pointed out, by ensuring that their arms exports are not going to be used to violate arms embargoes or to fuel conflict and by exercising better control over arms and ammunition imports in order to prevent diversion or re-transfers to unauthorised users.

“To my mind, these achievements all highlight the possibility of achieving breakthroughs in disarmament and non-proliferation even in the most trying of international climates,” Kane declared.

(IPS | 13 April 2015)

Photo: Angela Kane, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, addresses the 2013 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Credit: UN Photo / Jean-Marc Ferré

Mixed Middle East Reaction to Iran Nuclear Deal

By Mel Fryberg

RAMALLAH (IDN) – Regional reactions to the April 2 framework agreement on Iran’s nuclear programme have been mixed both in Israel and its Arab neighbourhood. Vested interests including geopolitical ambitions, economic competition, religious ideology, personal political ambition, and strategic alliances have all played their part in this mixed reaction.

As one of the chief antagonists to any deal reached between the P5 +1 – five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, plus Germany – and Iran, the predictable reaction of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the agreement has been one described by Israeli critics as “hysterical” and “right-wing reactionary”.

Days before the framework agreement was reached, Netanyahu continued to try and pressure the US administration to back out of any accord, claiming that Iran represented an existential threat to Israel, while simultaneously dredging up the Holocaust.

Once the deal was done, much of Israel’s extreme right-wing cabinet was in agreement that US President Barack Obama had thrown Israel under the bus – as if the central issue of the agreement reached was Israel.

Netanyahu, convinced of a higher calling, tried unsuccessfully to force Obama into obtaining an agreement from Iran that recognition of Israel’s right to exist was a prerequisite for any nuclear deal.

Israeli commentator Alex Fishman voiced what many Israelis feel in Israel’s right-leaning *‘YnetNews’* website. “Our friends in Washington have sold us out, along with their other allies in the Middle East, for a pittance”, was how he summed up the deal.

Fishman argued that the interim agreement was evidence of the strategic importance Iran attributes to its military nuclear programme.

However, not all Israelis concur with their government.

Prof Haggai Ram, head of Middle East Studies Depart

ment at Israel’s Ben Gurion University and an expert on Iran, challenged that assessment, stating that the claim that Iran presented an existential threat was a fig leaf for Israel’s occupation.

Ram said that for years Israel argued that peace with the Arabs was impossible and when that bogeyman turned out to be false they looked for a new one – Iran.

“Basically, since 1996 they have warned us that in a year, Iran will have a nuclear weapon,” said Ram in an interview with the left-leaning Israeli daily *‘Haaretz.’* ***“Let’s assume they are on the way. Are they intending to use nuclear capabilities to destroy Israel?”***

“In my opinion, the answer is a sweeping and unequivocal no. Most historians of the Islamic Republic of Iran since 1979 point out that Iranian policy is not dictated by messianic or religious considerations but rather pragmatic ones based on state interests,” said Ram.

“To say Iran poses an existential threat to Israel is wrong, if not a deception. Israel has bigger and more dangerous enemies. Iran serves as a fig leaf to the real danger to Israel’s fate – the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

The Israeli government was not the only one in the region voicing concerns about Iran’s regional political ambitions.

Strange bedfellows

Indeed, Israel has found strange bedfellows in a number of Arab governments who have also voiced scepticism over the agreement.

Samir Altaqi and Esam Aziz from the Middle East Briefing (MEB), a research and risk advisory company, believe the Arabs have reasons to question Iran’s motives. In an article, *‘What to Expect From the Arabs After the Iran Nuclear Deal’*, MEB said: “The Region’s leaders do not reject a nuclear deal with Iran as a matter of principle, but they see the whole issue of Tehran’s nuclear programme from a different perspective from that of Washington.”

“They understand that for any country to seek a nuclear weapon means one of two things: either it is

trying to build a decisive retaliatory capacity or it is trying to expand its influence out of its borders through nuclear blackmail.”

The article went on to point out regional polarisation, citing the disintegration of Yemen as an example where the Iranians have supported the Houthis. Further examples of Iranian interference include Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria and Bahrain.

“The problem here is that Iran – without a nuclear bomb, but free of sanctions and of any serious restrictions on its ballistic capabilities – will still be more aggressive in the regional theatre,” said MEB.

Sunni Saudi Arabia, whose military is fighting against the Houthis in Yemen, is also wary of its Shi’ite adversary and the deal reached with Iran, believing that Iranian influence flourishes on weak central governments and sectarian instability.

The Saudi cabinet released a conciliatory public statement in regard to the Iran deal but simultaneously called for “commitment to the principles of good neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of the Arab countries and respect of their sovereignty” even though the Saudis and Iran are backing opposing sides in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Nasser Ahmed Bin Ghaib, a researcher from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), told *‘Al Jazeera’* the Gulf States with their struggling economies are worried about economic competition, with the possibility of cheap Iranian oil flooding a saturated oil market and further lowering prices, following Western acceptance of Iran.

However, there are also mixed reactions to the Iran deal in the Gulf.

“Those who support a deal argue it would prevent the region from sliding into a destructive nuclear arms race that would deplete everybody. But others say the deal will have a number of negative consequences for the Gulf,” Bin Ghaib told *‘Al Jazeera.’*

Egyptian political analyst Ahmed Abd-Rabo told Egyptian daily *‘Al Ahram’* he believes sectarianism in



the Middle East seems the most likely outcome as the feud between Sunnis and Shias deepens.

“This follows anxiety in the Saudi-led Sunni camp following the conclusion of the framework agreement between Iran, the leader of the Shia camp, and the West,” said Abd-Rabo.

Turkey for its part is also divided over the Iran question. Akin Unver, assistant professor of international relations at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, says Turkey’s Iran policy shifted in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Afraid of Iran’s regional ambitions Turkey was com

placit in NATO’s defence shield in 2011.

“However, playing out behind the shadow of Iran’s nuclear programme was Turkey’s strategy of securing an eventual Iranian contribution to the European Union’s Southern Gas Corridor – first, in the form of Nabucco, and after it was discarded, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) project,” explained Unver.

So despite being disappointed about being sidelined diplomatically during negotiations with Iran, Turkey could still reap some benefits from Iran in the form of Iran being connected to the Southern Gas Corridor.

Most Iranians are elated at the prospect of rejoining the international community as a respected member, except of course for Iranian hardliners who believe the Iranian leadership has been too accommodating with the American “Great Satan”.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 8 April 2015]

Photo: The ministers of foreign affairs of France, Germany, the European Union, Iran, the United Kingdom and the United States as well as Chinese and Russian diplomats announcing the framework of a Comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme (Lausanne, 2 April 2015).

Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Obama Prepares for Showdown with Congress Over Iran Deal

By Jasmin Ramsey

WASHINGTON (IPS) - Two days after the deadline for reaching a deal over Iran's nuclear programme had passed, negotiators looked like they would be going home empty handed. But a surprisingly detailed framework was announced Apr. 2 in Lausanne, Switzerland, as well as in Washington, and in the same breath, U.S. President Barack Obama acknowledged the battle he faces on Capitol Hill.

The issues at stake here are bigger than politics," said Obama on the White House lawn after announcing the "historic understanding with Iran," which, "if fully implemented will prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

"If Congress kills this deal – not based on expert analysis, and without offering any reasonable alternative – then it's the United States that will be blamed for the failure of diplomacy," he said. "International unity will collapse, and the path to conflict will widen."

Negotiators from Iran and the P5+1 countries (U.S., U.K., France, China, Russia plus Germany) have until Jun. 30 to produce a comprehensive final accord on Iran's controversial nuclear programme. That gives Congress just under three months to embrace a "constructive oversight role", as the president said he hoped it would.

"Congress has played a couple of roles in these negotiations," Laicie Heeley, policy director at the Washington-based Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, told IPS. "I think some folks would like to think they are playing a bad cop role, but I'm not sure how effective they've been...it's a dangerous game to play."

If negotiators had gone home empty handed, hawkish measures, like the Kirk-Menendez sponsored Iran Nuclear Weapon Free Act of 2013, which proposes additional sanctions and the dismantling of all of Iran's enrichment capabilities – a non-starter for the Iranians – would have had a better chance of acquiring enough votes for a veto-proof majority.

But now that a final deal is on the horizon, Republicans will have a much harder time convincing enough Democrats to sign on to potentially deal-damaging bills.

With the Kirk-Menendez bill out of the way, the most immediate threat Obama faces now comes from the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 proposed by the Republican chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Bob Corker.

The Corker bill gives the final say to a Republican-majority Congress – which has consistently criticised the president's handling of the negotiations – granting it 60 days to vote on any comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran immediately after it's reached. During that period, the president would not be able to lift or suspend any Iran sanctions.

Corker said Thursday that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would take up the bill on Apr. 14, when lawmakers return from a spring recess.

"If a final agreement is reached, the American people, through their elected representatives, must have the opportunity to weigh in to ensure the deal truly can eliminate the threat of Iran's nuclear program and hold the regime accountable," he said in a statement.

But administration officials reminded reporters yesterday that the president would oppose any bill that it considered harmful to the prospects of a final deal.

"The president has made clear he would veto new sanctions legislation during the negotiation, and he made clear he would veto the existing Corker legislation during negotiations," said a senior administration official yesterday during a press call.

"What would not be constructive is legislative action

that essentially undercuts our ability to get the deal done," said the official.

The idea that Congress should have a say on any deal became especially popular after a preliminary accord was reached in Geneva two years ago, clearing the path for a host of congressional measures particularly from the right. But now that a final deal is in the works, hawks will have a harder time acquiring essential support from Democrats.

"Before yesterday Senator Corker was fairly certain he could get a veto-proof majority, but now that there's a good deal on the table he's going to have a lot of trouble getting votes from enough Democrats," said Heeley, who closely monitors Capitol Hill.

Statements from key Democrats yesterday retained what has become customary skepticism, but some are already hinting that they are gearing up to support the administration's position.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid called on his colleagues to "take a deep breath, examine the details and give this critically important process time to play out."

"We must always remain vigilant about preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon but there is no question that a diplomatic solution is vastly preferable to the alternatives," he said in a statement Thursday.

Obama has his work cut out for him, however, in the next two weeks as pro- and anti-deal groups press Congress to take up their positions.

"[W]e have concerns that the new framework announced today by the P5+1 could result in a final agreement that will leave Iran as a threshold nuclear state," said the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a leading Israel lobby group, in a statement.

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), a well-known hawkish think tank in D.C., also reiterated its stance against any deal that allows Iran to maintain its nuclear infrastructure.

"The parameters of the nuclear deal that have emerged look like we are headed toward a seriously flawed one," wrote FDD's Mark Dubowitz and Annie Fixler in an article on the Quartz website entitled 'Obama's Nuclear Deal With Iran Puts the World's Safety at Risk'.

The Israeli prime minister, who received numerous standing ovations when he addressed Congress on Iran in March – even after the White House made its opposition to his visit crystal clear – meanwhile called the framework deal "a grave danger" that would "threaten the very survival" of Israel.

Both Israel, and to a lesser degree Saudi Arabia, have made their opposition to the negotiations with Iran clear, and are expected to voice their concerns loudly over the next few months.

But the Obama administration's efforts can't be solely devoted to convincing allies or fighting a home front battle—it must also nail down the details of the final deal, which is far from guaranteed at this point.

"A lot of thorny issues will have to be resolved in the next three months, chief among them the exact roadmap for lifting the sanctions, language that goes into the U.N. Security Council resolution, measures for resolving the PMD [possible military dimensions] issues, and the mechanism for determining violations," Ali Vaez, the International Crisis Group's senior Iran analyst, told IPS.

"Negotiations will not get easier in the next three months; in fact, they will get harder as the parties struggle to resolve the remaining thorny issues and defend the agreement," said Vaez, who was in Lausanne when the agreement was announced.

"Success is not guaranteed, but this breakthrough has further increased the cost of breakdown," he added. (IPS | 3 April 2015)

Photo: President Barack Obama addresses a joint session of Congress at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Sep. 9, 2009.

Credit: Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

